Transitioning Between Childhood and Adulthood: How Learners Negotiate Childhood and Adulthood with Adult Caregivers at School and at Home

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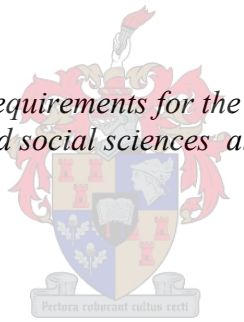

Thesis presented in fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts (Sociology) in the Faculty of Arts and social sciences at Stellenbosch University

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Declaration

By submitting this thesis electronically, I declare that the entirety of the work contained therein is my own, original work, that I am the sole author thereof (save to the extent explicitly otherwise stated), that reproduction and publication thereof by Stellenbosch University will not infringe any third party rights and that I have not previously in its entirety or in part submitted it for obtaining any qualification.

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Abstract

My aim in this study is to understand the processes of transitioning from childhood to adulthood from the point of view of Grade 10-11 learners (aged 16 and 17) attending a private school in the Western Cape. My study is influenced by the 'New' Sociology of Childhood, which seeks to engage with the agency of boys and girls and encourage 'voices' to children in the context of 'adult-centric' societies in which adulthood is constructed as the norm and children are viewed as 'adults-in- the- making' rather than as individuals in their own right (Pattman 2015). Influenced by the 'New' Sociology of Childhood, some writers have argued that the boundaries between childhood and adulthood are not simply determined by chronological age but rather shaped by social and institutional practices which may infantilize school goers as 'learners' and present teachers, in contrast, as adult authority figures whether as care givers or disciplinarians (see, for example, James and Prout; 1997). But schools may also be sites in which the boundaries between adulthood and childhood become blurred and open to negotiation (See Henderson et al, 2007). This thesis explores the processes of negotiating childhood and adulthood by engaging in conversational interviews with research participants. In particular I want to focus on how they position themselves in relation to adult carers at school and at home and how certain kinds of institutional practices may reinforce or unsettle boundaries between adults and children organized around understandings of authority and care. Thus, my thesis aims to rethink what it means to grow up from the point of view of young people as well as thinking of 'growing up' as a social construction and not as something fixed in biology.

Opsomming

My doel in hierdie studie is om die prosesse van oorgang van kind na volwassene te verstaan vanuit die oogpunt van Graad 10-11 leerders (ouderdomme 16 en 17) wat leersaam is by ‘n privaat skool naby Kaapstad. My studie is beïnvloed deur die ‘‘New’ Sociology of Childhood’ wat beoog om by die onafhanklikheidsvermoëns van seuns en dogters betrokke te raak en ‘stemme’ vir kinders aan te moedig in die konteks van ‘volwasse-sentriese’ gemeenskappe waar volwassenheid as die norm gekonstrueer word en kinders in die konteks van ‘volwassene in wording’ beskou word, eerder as individue in hulle eie reg (Pattman 2015). Die invloed van ‘‘New’ Sociology of Childhood’ het sommige skrywers laat argumenteer dat die grense tussen kinderdom en volwassenheid nie eenvoudig bepaal kan word deur die chronologiese ouderdom nie maar word eerder gevorm deur sosiale en institusionele praktyke wat skoolgangers verkleuter as ‘leerders’ en in kontras, onderwysers aanbied as volwasse gesagsfigure, hetsy as versorgers of disiplineerders (sien byvoorbeeld James en Prout: 1997). Maar skole mag ook terryne wees waar die grense tussen volwassenheid en kinderdom vaag raak en oop vir onderhandeling (sien Henderson et. al, 2007). Hierdie tesis verken die prosesse van onderhandeling in kinderdom en volwassenheid deur deelname in gesprekvoerende onderhoude met navorsingsdeelnemers in besonder. Ek wil fokus op hoe hulle hulself posisioneer met verhouding tot volwasse versorgers by die skool en tuis en hoe sekere soorte institusionele praktyke die grense tussen volwassenes en kinders kan versterk of ontwrig rondom die verstandhouding van gesag en versorging. Dus het my tesis die doel om te herdink wat dit beteken om groot te word vanuit die oogpunt van jong mense asook die denke van ‘grootword’ as ‘n sosiale konstruksie en nie iets wat geëts is in biologie nie.

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Lastly, I would like to say a massive thank you to the school I conducted my research at and a huge thank you to every one of my research participants for their willingness and openness to share their experiences and opinions with me. My research aimed to place my participants as the experts, and they made it easy for me to do this, thank you for sharing your voices, I heard you.

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Acronyms

HIV: Human Immunodeficiency Virus

AIDS: acquired immunodeficiency syndrome

LGBTQI: Lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer and intersex

UK: United Kingdom

TV: Television

LO: Life Orientation

CV: Curriculum Vitae

Chapter 1: Introduction

1.1 Aim

My aim in this study is to understand the processes of transitioning from childhood to adulthood from the point of view of Grade 10-11 learners (aged 16 and 17) attending a private school in the Western Cape. Influenced by the 'New' Sociology of Childhood, some writers have argued that the boundaries between childhood and adulthood are not simply determined by chronological age but rather shaped by social and institutional practices which may infantilize school goers as 'learners' and present teachers, in contrast, as adult authority figures, whether as care givers or disciplinarians (see, for example, James and Prout; 1997). But schools may also be sites in which the boundaries between adulthood and childhood become blurred and open to negotiation (See Henderson et al, 2007). I want to explore the processes of negotiating childhood and adulthood by engaging in conversational interviews with my participants. In particular I want to focus on how they position themselves in relation to adult carers at school and at home and how certain kinds of institutional practices may reinforce or unsettle boundaries between adults and children organised around understandings of authority and care.

1.2 Motivation

My interest in this research topic is motivated by my own experiences of taking on what I understood as, adult caring responsibilities in my early years. My mom and dad were very young when I was born and my dad did not feel ready to father and continued to travel abroad, while my mom stayed in South Africa to look after me with the help of my grandparents. I developed a sense

of responsibility for my mom's welfare as a single parent, thus inverting common understandings of mother-daughter relations and providing support and care for her.

My motivation for engaging in this research is also influenced by my own schooling experiences notably as a high school learner negotiating transitions from childhood to adulthood.

Schools play an important role in establishing age as a significant source of identification and dimension of power, not only by distinguishing teachers as adult authority figures from learners but by dividing learners into various 'years', with age becoming a key criterion for which 'year' learners are allocated. At the high school I went to, it was noticeable that as learners moved from one year to another, they were given more responsibilities and accrued certain privileges, as if signifying transitioning from childhood to adulthood. In this study, in which I return to my old school to interview learners about how they experience growing older at school and home, we discuss what this means for them and how they negotiate this.

When I was in high school, I was concerned about the status of 'prefects', learners who were bestowed as figures of authority by the school, and who seemed to straddle the divide between teachers and learners. I remember being surprised that the prefects were stricter and more authoritarian than the actual teachers as if these were symbols of adulthood that certain learners were appropriating. In my research I want to explore how my participants position themselves (and other learners in the school) in relation to perceived symbols of childhood, youth and adulthood.

1.3 The school in my study

The location of my fieldwork was at a private high-school in the Western Cape province of South Africa, and was conducted between February 2019 and June 2019, excluding the school holidays over March 2019.

The ethos of this school was, according to an official school document, informed by a commitment to educating the 'whole child', which incorporated academics, sports, cultural activities, leadership skills and participation in outdoor programs. The school further explains that this combines all these aspects in order to guarantee that every student can flourish and explore individual talent in any number of spheres. The school's website explains that children are taught to think for themselves and the teachers encourage this daily, by creating an environment where young people can ask questions and form positive relationships with teachers and classmates. The school advocates for a community feeling, where children can view the school as a second-home. I took the above very seriously during my consideration when selecting this school at which to conduct my research.

I had left the school 8 years ago, long before the publication of the document outlining the school's ethos summarised above. From my memories of schooling the teachers were always seen as the ultimate figure of authority and had the final say without very much room for varying opinions from the students. I choose to return to this, my old school, because I wanted to see these new pedagogic commitments in action, and to explore how students experienced these. After approaching the school about my research and chatting to the head master I was invited to attend the teachers' weekly staff meeting.

One of the English teachers was leading the staff meeting and immediately started the session with some information on student centered approaches to learning. I was quite excited as the pedagogic approach she advocated aligned with the aims of my thesis with regards to being student centered and making the students the figures of authority in my research. This was exemplified in the *Harkness Method* which the English teacher introduced in the meeting, which entailed swopping a teacher-centered setup to a discussion format where students take the lead in their learning, demonstrating critical thinking (Smith and Foley, 2009).

During the staff meeting every teacher got an opportunity to discuss individually students who they felt or knew were 'struggling', whether they were struggling emotionally, mentally or academically. The teachers were acutely aware of what was going on in the lives of students and they all brainstormed ways that they could help as well as check in with the students in need.

I am interested in exploring student experiences of schooling and the pleasures and anxieties these might generate. In Chapter 4 of my thesis, I report on concerns and anxieties relating to academic and other pressures which students raised in a Timeline exercise in which they monitored how their lives had changed over the last few years. Becoming Grade 10 students, as they were when I conducted my research, seemed to be a particularly anxious time for many of the students.

The school shared many of the features which characterise Kenway and Lazarus' (2017) description of elite schools in terms of material resources and ethos such as low learner-teacher ratios, excellent facilities, exam records, and extramural activities. As I report in the findings section of my research there was an expectation amongst all the learners I interviewed that they would pursue their studies at a university level, either in South Africa or elsewhere.

An example of the kind of extramural activities the school is able to organise given its resources, is a programme called 'Trudge*' which involves learners participating in groups in a 27-day hike, in the surrounding rural areas, and is presented by the school as a kind of 'coming of age' ritual in which learners 'mature' and develop a sense of responsibility for each other. This is a huge selling point for the school as it is something that state-funded schools are unable to match due to their relative lack of resources. How the learners I interviewed experienced Trudge (they had all undertaken this in the previous year) and whether or not they connected this with transitioning from childhood to adulthood are issues I explore in Chapter 4.

Drawing on Kenway and Lazarus' research, I raise questions about the impact of attending an elite, private, school on learners' expectations about 'growing up' and transitioning between childhood and adulthood, and the kinds of examples they use to illustrate these (in school and their families).

*Trudge is a pseudonym

1.4 Conceptualizing childhood and adulthood: The 'New' Sociology of Childhood

As I have mentioned, my study aims to explore what it means to 'grow up' from the points of view of female and male high school learners and what sorts of associations they make with 'growing up'. It is influenced by the 'New' Sociology of Childhood (James and Prout, 1997) which seeks to engage with the agency of boys and girls and encourage 'voices' to children in the context of 'adult-centric' societies in which adulthood is constructed as the norm and children are viewed as 'adults-in-the-making' rather than as individuals in their own right (Pattman 2015).

Proponents of the 'New' Sociology of Childhood such as King (2013) and O'Dell, Brownlow & Rosqvist, (2018:350) are critical of studies of childhood and adolescence which reproduce adulthood as an unarticulated point of reference against which children are constructed as Other. Rather than assuming childhood and adulthood are discrete and biologically determined, they argue instead that they are constructed relationally in our everyday lives. This may take the form of projecting 'innocence' and 'ignorance' onto children (for example in sexuality education as it is taught in many schools: See Pattman and Bhana 2017) and constructing adults, in contrast, as knowledgeable and mature. Adulthood, as understood by researchers influenced by the 'New' Sociology of Childhood then is something which is made through forms of exclusion (and infantilisation) not only of children but older people with disabilities and even women who choose not to have children (O'Dell, Brownlow & Rosqvist, 2018: 350).

1.5 Methodology

Drawing on the 'New' Sociology of Childhood, my research aims to engage with my participants as active agents, and to encourage them to reflect on how they construct their social worlds with a particular focus on 'growing up', their views and understandings of childhood and adulthood, and how they identify in relation to these at school and home.

I explore processes of negotiating childhood and adulthood by engaging in conversational interviews with the young people in my study. In particular, I focus on how they position themselves in relation to adult carers at school and at home and how certain kinds of institutional

practices may reinforce or unsettle boundaries between adults and children organized around understandings of authority and care.

My research focus is not on adult caregivers per se (in school and home), but on how the young boys and girls in my study relate to them and how this impacts their own experiences of growing up and transitioning between childhood and adulthood. What kinds of relationships do they forge with teachers and parents and other adult carers at home and school, and how do they position themselves in these relationships, as fellow adults, or children or both and what meanings do they attach to these? I am interested in exploring the significance of gender in structuring particular kinds of relations boys and girls establish with parents, guardians, and teachers. Concerning this, I want to engage with young people's expectations of adult caregivers in home and school and whether these are gendered.

In order to facilitate a conversation about these themes, I conducted focus group discussions in which I tried to encourage dialogue between the participants by picking up on issues and concerns raised by particular participants and putting these to other participants.

As I elaborate in chapter 3 various structured activities are used to promote discussions. For example, participants' 'Timelines', in which they are asked to represent their lives by delineating 'significant moments' along a line, provided excellent media for participants to reflect upon and discuss their constructions of growing up and what they see as significant moments in this process.

1.6 Key Themes and research questions

Key research Questions

1) How do Grade 10 -11 private high school learners construct and negotiate childhood and adulthood at home and school?
2) What signifies childhood and adulthood according to my participants, and how do they identify in relation to their versions of childhood and adulthood at school and at home.
3) How does 'growing up' impact relations of care with adults at school and home?

4) How gendered and how classed is "growing up in and out of school"?

In chapter 3 I elaborate on these and more specific questions I put to my participants.

1.7 Summary of Chapters

Chapter 1

The first chapter of my thesis has served as an introduction to provide an outline of the focus of my study, namely to understand processes of transitioning from childhood to adulthood from the point of view of Grade 10-11 learners (aged 16 and 17) attending a private school in the Western Cape. My study aims to encourage them to set the agenda and act as authorities about themselves. I discuss my motivations for conducting this research which includes my experiences as a child of assuming 'adult' caring roles. I provide a brief introduction to the school in my study which my participants attended. I introduce ways of conceptualizing childhood and adulthood which inform my research and the methodology I use. I also provide key research questions.

Chapter 2

Chapter 2 of my thesis presents a review of key texts which inform my research. I draw on some of this in later chapters when presenting and analysing findings. Chapter 2 engages with literature on The Historical Invention of Childhood with the Creation of Mass schooling as well as the 'New' Sociology of Childhood *(*James and Prout: 1997). In addition to the above, Chapter 2 addresses poststructuralist feminist writers, such as Davies (2003), Henderson et al (2007), Frosh, Phoenix & Pattman (2002), Mayeza, (2017) who argue that there is no essential or homogenous masculinity or femininity which determines, at birth, the interests and propensities of boys and girls. Chapter 2 also engages with Life Orientation and raising questions about whether this validates or infantilises young people, a concern taken up later in focus group discussions I had with my participants. Chapter 2 draws too on Jane Kenway and Michael Lazarus' (2017) global study of elite schools. This illustrates how 'classed' signifiers of 'growing up' may be in elite schools, a theme which I explore in Chapter 5 in conversations with participants (following their time line exercise) about what constitutes 'growing up'.

Chapter 3

Chapter 3 engages with methodological processes and concerns which frame my research. This chapter includes a detailed summary of the timeline exercise which I used at the start of each focus group discussion. In this, my participants were asked to recall key moments which they associated with recent years in the past. This exercise operated partly as an ice breaker, and also as a participatory introduction to my research, in which learners were encouraged to reflect upon themselves in relation to the research topics. In this exercise, I wanted to encourage the young people participating to reflect upon the criteria they used as markers of 'growing up'. In Chapter 3, I address how I used the timeline exercises in conjunction with focus group discussions (which followed these) as data collection methods. This chapter also provides a rationale of why I choose to do my research at that specific school and how I presented myself to students and staff at the school.

A key concern in my research is to be self-reflective, and to this end I focus on how I (as a young woman and ex-learner at the school) impacted on my research participants and them with me, and I address this in a section on 'Putting myself in the picture'. Linked with this I raise questions about the advantages and disadvantages of researchers being perceived as 'insiders' or 'outsiders' by their participants. I draw on my experience as an 'insider' (as an ex-learner in the school). This was helpful, I argue, in enabling me to establish a rapport with my participants but created a presumption of familiarity with them and the school which mitigated against the kind of critical and self-reflective discussions I was trying to encourage, in my learner-centred methodological approach. Indeed, to promote such discussions and obtain information from them about the school and how they experienced and navigated childhood and adulthood, I tried, as I elaborate in Chapter 3, to undo presumptions of my familiarity. This chapter also includes ethical considerations relating to my research.

Chapter 4

My research findings are presented and analysed in Chapter 4 which comprises two parts: Part 1 focuses on the time line exercise and the significant moments in recent years which my participants associated with 'growing up' and transitioning to and from childhood and adulthood.
Part 1 includes 5 key themes that the young people in my study raised through presenting and comparing themes that emerged from the timeline exercises with others in the group.

These themes included: Increasing academic pressures, Travelling abroad, Their first boyfriend/girlfriend experiences, Reflections on Trudge (the school's 'rite of passage' initiative) and lastly, Increasing school sporting commitments, especially for boys.

Part 2 follows Part 1 which prepared my participants to reflect critically on their views and experiences of 'growing older'. In Part 2 I posed questions about what they understood by adulthood and childhood and how they positioned themselves in relation to these. I also posed questions about whether and how such experiences were gendered (and classed) and the associations they made (positive or negative) with childhood and adulthood and growing up.

Chapter 5

Lastly, Chapter 5 constitutes my conclusion in which I reflect on my findings as well as my experience of being a researcher at this specific school and finally making recommendations for further research. This Chapter includes 6 sections, namely: My interest in exploring 'growing up' from the perspectives of female and male school learners, Developing learner-centered research methods, Addressing my research questions, How my research participants experienced participating in research about themselves and 'growing up', The Missed: The importance and missed opportunity of LO in schools and lastly Implications of my research for contributing to the development of Life Orientation teaching plans on Growing Up.

Chapter 2: literature review and theoretical framework

2.1 Introduction

In this chapter, I draw on key texts which engage theoretically with what it means to address age as a social construction, and which advocates ways of doing research with 'young people' which seek to explore how they construct and position themselves in relation to age, gender and sexuality. I draw on these texts to provide rationales for articulating and posing key research questions outlined in Chapter 1. These texts engage with:

2.1.1 The historical invention of childhood with the creation of mass schooling;
2.1.2 The 'New' Sociology of Childhood and addressing the agency of boys and girls in research
2.1.3 Post-structuralist feminism: exploring how young people negotiate gender and age categories and how these intersect
2.1.4 Young people Inventing adulthoods
2.1.5 Acting immature in schools and asserting boyhoods
2.1.6 The gendering of parenthood, and infantilization of fathers.
2.1.7 How young women and men experience Life Orientation in schools and whether this validates or infantilizes them
2.1.8 How social class (in conjunction with gender) may impact accounts and experiences of transitioning between childhood and adulthood
2.1.9 Self-reflexivity and age in research with young people

2.1.1 The historical invention of childhood with the creation of mass schooling

My interest in the role of schooling in producing childhoods is influenced by the work of Phillippe Aries who argued that childhood, was invented in Europe through the creation of mass schooling.

Aries renovated the cultural history of childhood by studying paintings, images and persona; documents (Dekker and Groenendijk, 2012: 135). Aries assessed a range of sources and determined that until deep into the middle ages the concept of childhood as a separate phase in the

human life cycle did not exist (Dekker and Groenendijk, 2012: 135). The key indication for the notion of childhood not existing during the middle ages was the lack of specific "childish" elements in medieval, portrayal and sculpture which included the absence of games, book and clothes custom-made to a child's form (Dekker and Groenendijk, 2012: 135). This all started to change in the 13th century with the first evidence of 'the discovery of childhood' (Dekker and Groenendijk, 2012: 135). In conjunction with 'the discovery of childhood' was the need for the presumed requisite education for the child in order for them to become an adult (Dekker and Groenendijk, 2012: 135).

Going to school and learning became a standard children's activity, with school becoming an environment for children (Dekker and Groenendijk, 2012: 136). It is argued that the necessity to educate one's child led to the prolonging of childhood as school was directly linked to one being a child.

How, in my study, my student participants defined adults and children and positioned themselves in relation to these is thus influenced and circumscribed by the historical formation of wider social structures such as schools which serve to prolong childhood.

2.1.2 The 'New' Sociology of Childhood and engaging with the agency of boys and girls in research

In Chapter 1, I introduced the 'New' Sociology of Childhood as providing a theoretical framework which informed my thinking as well as my research. The 'New' Sociology of Childhood (James and Prout: 1997) represents a paradigmatic shift in childhood studies which has sought to engage with children as active agents in their own right rather than as passive products of socialisation as they have traditionally been represented in functionalist understandings of family life (eg Parsons, 1997). James and Prout (1997) argue that the influence of particular theories of 'socialization' in sociology and anthropology which construct adults as instigators and teachers and children as passive products, has marginalized children in relation to adults and rendered them relatively passive or invisible in research (Pattman, 2015: 80). Socialization is usually understood as 'the process through which children are 'taught' the social mores pertinent to any particular society or

culture' and has tended to be framed as something that is "done to children through their interactions with adults" (Pattman, 2015: 80).

Rather than interpreting (gender) socialisation in, an 'adult centric' way, as a top down process, as something done to children over which they have no control, researchers and theorists influenced by the 'New' Sociology of Childhood have raised questions about how boys and girls construct and negotiate their identities (Frosh et al, 2002) in social contexts such as families and schools.

As well as drawing attention to the everyday ways boys and girls act and position themselves in various social contexts, researchers such as Charlotte Hardman, a key figure in 'New' Sociology of Childhood, have tried to develop qualitative and ethnographic forms of research aimed at encouraging voices to children, and girls in particular whom, she claimed were marginalized by forms of adult-centrism and patriarchy. As far back as 1973, she compared her work on the anthropology of children to the study of women, maintaining that both women and children are seen as "muted groups" (James and Prout, 1997:21). Charlotte Hardman wished to place the voices of women and children at the forefront of research. Therefore, childhood studies within the social sciences have been marked not by an absence of interest in children, but rather by their silence (James and Prout, 1997).

2.1.3 Drawing on Post-structuralist feminism and exploring how young people negotiate gender and age categories and how these intersect

In my research, I am interested in exploring the very categories of male and female, like young and old, and the significance these hold for the young men and women in my study. This resonates with the work of poststructuralist feminist writers such as Davies (2003) Henderson et al (2007), Frosh et al (2002), Mayeza (2017) who argue that there is no essential or homogenous masculinity or femininity that determines at birth the interests and aptitudes of boys and girls. They argue instead that these are plural not singular, and are socially and relationally constructed through everyday forms of interaction. They raise questions about how children come to identify as particular kinds of boys and girls through negotiating and policing these categories. I draw upon

such writers to examine how age, gender (and class) intersect as sources of identification and power in school-based and other contexts.

My approach to exploring childhood which aims to engage with children's agency and how they negotiate growing up in an adult-centric and patriarchal society draws on Henderson et al's (2007) Inventing adulthoods: a biographical approach to youth transitions. In this study, Henderson et al (2007) 'argue that adulthood does not exist but has to be invented' in the sense that it is a relational construction that is, in itself, produced in opposition to versions of youth and childhood. This study took place in Northern Ireland (2013) where they held focus group discussions with young people about how they imagined adulthoods and how this reflected upon their self-understandings and trajectories. I will elaborate further on the work of Henderson et al (2007) in later chapters when reporting on the findings of a 'timeline' exercise that I conducted with my participants as a way of exploring their accounts of growing up.

2.1.4 Young people Inventing adulthoods

Works by Thompson and Holland (2004) focuses on the social construction of adulthoods by young people. This is a key text which strongly influenced my own research in terms of theorizing the social construction of age, young people and how they invent adulthoods, and the young person centred methods they develop to explore these. Similarly to mine, the study by Thompson and Holland (2004) used focus group discussions to document how young people constructed their 'expected or desired' adulthoods (Thompson & Holland, 2004: 2). Thompson and Holland (2004) spent over two years exploring the young people's understandings of and strategies for transitioning to adulthood (Thompson & Holland, 2004: 2). Thompson and Holland (2004) point out that there is a large amount of psychological literature that is concerned with documenting and theorizing the processes of moral development in both young people and children (Thompson & Holland, 2004: 3). Whilst these works have contributed to understandings on the significance of age and gender in processes of social and moral development they are limited in so far as they fail to address the cultural specificity of assumptions about youth and gender, and how these vary between societies and institutions. Much like in my own research, the focus group discussions allowed me, the researcher, to observe the dynamics between myself and the young people as well

as how they young people interacted with each other during the focus groups in order to produce opinions and discussions on relevant themes (Thompson & Holland, 2004: 5). During this study the research team used a method called 'memory work' in conjunction with the focus group discussions, which was used as a means to gain insights in to the lives of the young people (Thompson & Holland, 2004: 5).

Furthermore, through the memory work they asked the young people to recall some earlier memories in their life such as good and bad memories and the key people in their lives, as well as places and events that were significant in their lives in regards to their moral development (Thompson & Holland, 2004: 5). In my own research I employed a very similar method which I refer to as a Timeline exercise, where I asked my research participants at the start of the focus group discussion to highlight significant moments in their lives over the last 5-6 years. This proved to be very helpful in gathering rich data as well as getting to know each research participant on a deeper level. Thompson and Holland (2004) argue that their study provided insights on how the values of young people varied according to age, gender, social class, as well as their orientation towards authority figures (Thompson & Holland, 2004: 5). As I elaborate later in my findings chapter and my Conclusion I make similar claims about the contribution of my own research.

2.1.5 Acting immature in schools and asserting boyhoods

My research aims to examine how young people construct adulthoods and childhoods (and in between) and how they identify in relation to these in school and at home. How gender and age, as well as other variables intersect in the social construction of 'maturity' is powerfully illustrated in school based studies such as Frosh et al (2002) and Leathwood and Francis (2006)..

Frosh et al (2002) conducted participatory interview studies with 11-14 year old boys in schools in London, and found that these were often marked by contestations with girls of their age, and took the form of ridiculing them for being, in their eyes too 'mature'. In contrast to the girls, many boys 'revelled in being immature', constructing girls, in opposition, as 'mature' and 'boring'. Indeed, a common way in which boys derived a sense of esteem and popularity was through 'messing around' and acting 'immature' 'having a laugh' and having fun. This study explored

these boys' investments in being and acting ‘immature’ and how they identified through this in opposition to girls. During the interview sessions, many boys constructed being funny as a solely male characteristic and inferred that girls were not hardy enough to participate in humorous joking (Frosh et al, 2002: 104). The boys went as far as to say that they felt less free when they were communicating with girls and always having to watch what they say to girls (Frosh et al, 2002: 104). Interviewing girls about boys, Frosh et al (2002) found that one of the main criticisms that girls levelled against boys was precisely their ‘immaturity’ in school, and especially when they were in groups with other boys.

Thus, numerous boys in this study problematized girls for lacking a sense of humour, which made the boys feel uncomfortable (Frosh et al, 2002: 104). In conjunction to girls being seen as more serious by the boys, the boys also viewed girls as being somewhat more grown up and mature than boys (Frosh et al, 2002: 104). Girls appeared to be more serious as well as having a greater commitment to schoolwork and therefore did not have as much fun. However, this was often seen as a way present themselves and become more popular with teachers and parents (Frosh et al, 2002: 104). This is further demonstrated by Leathwood and Francis (2006) who explained that an emerging discourse situated male students as victims of the ‘feminization’ of schools (Leathwood and Francis, 2006: 57). This discourse accused female teachers of favouring female students and creating a blatant ‘feminized schooling environment’ (Leathwood and Francis, 2006: 57). Furthermore, a few boys spelt out that boys are far less serious than girls and even referred to boys in general as ‘immature’, this was because boys tend to engage in high-risk behaviour, often without thinking through the consequences (Frosh et al, 2002: 104).

As I elaborate later in my findings, the boys in my study of 16–17-year-old learners also took pleasure in constructing themselves as immature in relation to girls through humour which was often directed at girls for being too ‘adult- like’.

2.1.6 The gendering of parenthood and infantilisation of fathers

In my research, I raise questions with my participants about becoming mothers or fathers, the significance of this as a marker of adulthood. Do they imagine becoming mothers or fathers, how do they construct motherhood and fatherhood and how is this influenced by their experiences of adult care?

Recently there has been a proliferation of qualitative studies on parenthood in South Africa Bhana, Morrell, Shefer & Ngabaza, (2010). These have tended, though, to focus on parenthood from the perspective of the parents and teachers and not the children. Since the focus of my dissertation is 16 -17 year old learners and how they construct and relate to adult caregivers at school and home, I am particularly interested in engaging with studies that focus on parenthood from the perspectives of children as in Frosh et al's (2002) interview study with 11-14-year-old London boys.

The boys who participated in this study emphasised the very different kinds of relationships they forged with their mothers than their fathers. Fathers were seen as playful, often making jokes, whereas their mothers were portrayed as more serious (Frosh et al 2002: 2). Yet when the schoolboys spoke about who they went to for emotional support and guidance, their mothers were the first person they would go to (Frosh et al , 2001: 3) Many of the boys complained of the absence of their fathers, with the majority of boys leaning on their mother for primary care and support (Frosh et al, 2002: 4) When it came to love relationships and the schoolboys talking about girlfriends it became apparent that the father-son relationships often relied so strongly on the axis of teasing and fun, that when the boys needed help, comfort or emotional release, they realized that they could not trust their father to be able to manage it, and therefore turned to their mothers for support in this regard (Frosh et al, 2002: 9)

2.1.7 How young women and men experience Life Orientation in school and whether this may validate or infantilise them

Arguments for developing Life Orientation initiatives draw on pedagogic concerns, in the context of the HIV/AIDS pandemic, to engage with the agency of young men and women as sexual beings,

and to encourage dialogue and critical reflection on the significance and meanings which they attach to gender and sexuality in their lives generally. But the topic of young people and sexuality is still very much fortified by cultural taboos regarding adults and young people conversing about sexuality and by adult constructions of children, in many primarily Christian countries, as non-sexual beings, through idealisations of youthful 'innocence' (and ignorance) in relation to sexuality (Pattman and Bhana, 2017).

For example, Hilary Zaggi's ethnographic study (Zaggi: PhD in progress) of a boarding high school in Northern Nigeria provides a powerful account of informal and everyday forms of sexuality education which constructed sexuality as an adult activity in which students 'as not yet adults' should show little interest let alone develop fantasies or relations mediated by sexual desire. Girls were constructed by teachers as particularly 'vulnerable' and in need of protection, as if, in contrast to boys of their age, they were not as sexual and more child-like, yet also more 'responsible'. This was manifested in the constant warnings aimed at girls about not dressing in 'provocative' ways or bringing 'shame' to the school by becoming pregnant. Double sexual standards were reinforced through these gendered forms of social and sexual policing, with girls much more than boys being castigated as irresponsible and shameful for expressing sexual desire.

In addition to the above Zaggis' (Zaggi: PhD in progress) work at Zisan Secondary School is pertinent to my own research, specifically in relation to how sexuality education produces gendered subjectivities and constructions of masculinities and femininities associated with versions of childhood and adulthood. Furthermore, Zaggi's (PhD in progress) work connects with mine as his work provides powerful accounts of everyday forms of informal sexuality education in his school-based ethnography, and how this connects with (gendered) assumptions of adulthood and childhood.

At the school where Zaggi conducted his research, for Friday assembly, students were divided according to gender, where the male students are seated on the one side and female students are seated on the opposite side (Zaggi, PhD in progress: 8-9). Teachers further lectured the male students about "…*being responsible in relationships with girls by treating them nicely and not engaging in any form of sexual relationship*" (Zaggi, PhD in progress: 8-9). On the female side of the assembly the female teachers discussed topics such as cleanliness, learning the correct way of

how a girl should behave in order to " *maintain their integrity, not to allow anybody have access to them or their value, but maintaining their track, that when you derail out of the track, you can crash-land, when you let yourself so free and so lose to everyone then, the male will use and dump you and you won't achieve your dream, so many things about your life will be truncated"* (Zaggi, PhD in progress: 9). The above examples emphasize the fact that males are seen as sexual beings, whereas females are perceived as objects of male's desire. Women are seen as being non-sexual and having to guard and protect their body, whereas it is understood that men are sexual beings who need to be lectured in regard to their responsibilities linked to being sexual beings such as treating the girls 'nicely'. It is also clear from Zaggi's (PhD in progress) work that the female teacher is struggling to directly address sexuality with the students. The language she uses such as "*the male will use and dump you and you won't achieve your dream"* highlights the notion that young women are viewed as asexual by adults and society as the teachers lecture to the girls makes it seem as though the female students integrity is on the line if they have sex or engage in sexual relationships with the opposite sex.

Sexuality, as recent studies have demonstrated, is not something that becomes meaningful and significant only as we approach adulthood, even if it has been constructed in South Africa (Pattman and Bhana: 2017), as in many other societies, as an indicator of adulthood by adults wishing 'innocence' on children and envisaging them as asexual. Sexuality education or Life Orientation was introduced as a way of trying to mitigate the impact of HIV/AIDS and encouraging young people to take care of themselves (Pattman and Bhana, 2017).

But recent studies conducted by Dennis Francis (2017) in South Africa have pointed to the problematic discourse of how assumptions of heteronormativity inform and are reproduced in life orientation teachers' pedagogic practices in schools. Rather than creating an open space for the young people to engage with their sexuality, when students requested information and examples about same-sex relationships or sexuality, specifically during Life Orientation lessons, the teachers would neither explain children's discriminations nor give their own opinion on the topic (Francis, 2017: 241). On closer inspection Francis (2017) discovered that many teachers did not have the answers to these questions and were ill-informed on the topic of sexuality and same- sex relationships (Francis, 2017: 241). Through these informal practices, Life Orientation teachers drew on and reinforced normative assumptions of heteronormativity.

In my research, I explore my participants' views and experiences of Life Orientation and whether they experience this as a platform where they can speak openly about sexuality and sexual relations, or as a space where they feel embarrassed and infantilized as young women and men as if they are not mature enough to be considered sexual beings.

2.1.8 How social class (in conjunction with gender) may impact on accounts and experiences of transitioning between childhood and adulthood

My research draws on children from relatively privileged backgrounds attending a private school, and I am interested in exploring how and whether the stories my participants tell about transitioning from childhood to adulthood at school and in their families are classed as well as gendered.

Jane Kenway and Michael Lazarus (2017) argue that elite schools shape the virtues and integrities of young people to help them to preserve their class superiority (Kenway and Lazarus, 2017: 265). Thus, for private schools to keep their affluent clientele, they must consistently protect their high status (Kenway and Lazarus, 2017: 265). Just as importantly, they must appear to accommodate the moral codes of liberal, progressive and anti-elitist social sentiments (Kenway and Lazarus, 2017: 265). Through such discourses, they both confound the schools' as well as their clients' economic power and privilege and expand the schools' commodity value (Kenway and Lazarus, 2017: 265).

Jane Kenway and Michael Lazarus (2017) drew their argument from the project *Elite Schools in Globalizing Circumstances*. The study was conducted on seven international elite schools, one of them being Greystone in South Africa (Kenway and Lazarus, 2017: 265). The schools were classified as elite based on the following conditions: said the school has to have constant and substantial records of success in public exams, entry into prominent university as well as have influential alumni across the professions, industry, the arts and sport (Kenway and Lazarus, 2017: 265). Most of these schools are affluent, charge high fees and have increased income from donations (Kenway and Lazarus, 2017: 265). Their resources are usually far superior to most

schools such as government-funded schools (Kenway and Lazarus, 2017: 265). Lastly, these schools cater mostly for the powerful and privileged classes (Kenway and Lazarus, 2017: 266).

A common discourse of disavowal was to reason that although the school may be elite, they themselves are not elitist (Kenway and Lazarus, 2017: 269). Numerous pupils recognized that their school was elite in regards to the fact that they had top-of-the-range resources, teachers and result in comparison to most other schools, yet they further argued that for them, although they had many material resources available to them, they argued that that did not mean that they as students were elitist, as elitism was connected with assorted disapprovals (Kenway and Lazarus, 2017: 269). The reasoning here is that the schools produce an intellectual elite, which is most often demonstrated by their success in public exams (Kenway and Lazarus, 2017: 271). This is due to the fact that private schools have the resources for children to perform at a higher academic rate, such as a low student-teacher ratios, which allows the young people more one-on-one time with the teacher. Its grade 12 results demonstrate the school's grand accomplishments. We can argue that "students themselves become commodities" (Kenway and Lazarus, 2017: 271), based on the high level of education they received due to the extra resources available to the students at these private schools. This linked to my own research as many of my participants emphasized focusing dramatically on their academic achievements in order for them to get in to the best possible universities

Furthermore, the school in which I conducted my research shares many of the features which characterise Kenway and Lazarus' (2017) description of elite schools in terms of material resources and ethos, such as low learner-teacher ratios, excellent facilities, exam records, and extramural activities. As I report in the findings chapter, there was an expectation amongst all the learners, I interviewed that they would pursue their studies at a university level, either in South Africa or elsewhere. An example of the kind of extramural activities the school is able to organize given its resources, is a programme called 'Trudge' which involves learners participating in groups in a long hiking expedition, and is presented by the school as a kind of generational rite of passage. This is a huge selling point for the school as it is something that state-funded schools are unable to match due to their relative lack of resources. Drawing on Kenway and Lazarus' research, I raise questions about the impact of attending an elite, private, school on learners' expectations about

'growing up' and transitioning between childhood and adulthood, and the kinds of examples they use to illustrate these (in school and their families).

2.1.9 Self-reflexivity and age in research with young people

Research is often understood as a 'tool' or instrument for extracting information from participants. However, influenced by Mayeza (2017) Frosh et al (2002) and Pattman and Bhana (2017) I want to argue for ways of thinking about and doing qualitative research as a social encounter and social context in which particular kinds of relations are established between researcher and participants. Such relations make it possible for certain kinds of conversations and dialogue to take place. In school-based interviews and ethnographic research with learners, it is paramount that the researcher reflects on the dynamics of the research encounter. This allows her or him to democratise research relations and appear not as a figure of authority, as adults usually do in schools, but as a friendly person who wants to engage with the learners and their interests and concerns.

This is precisely what Emmanuel Mayeza (2017) tried to do in his ethnographic study of children and play in a township school near Durban. The children in the playground were surprised because he was an adult who was mixing with them in the playground, and none of the teachers did that. They were surprised too when he engaged with them in play, and were keen to incorporate him into some of their games and to reflect with him on the social significance they attached to forms of play. As it turned out the children really loved him in a way and they almost seemed to hero-worship him particularly the young boys, because he was an adult who was mixing with them in the playground and none of the other teachers did that. The children invented this name for him, 'coach', as if he was some kind of soccer guru and they idealized him in a way, as an adult who was friendly with them.

The above is an example of the social construction of adulthood or rather age, and illustrates how these young people view and relate to teachers. Teachers are seen as figures of authority, and they tend to keep their distance from the children when it comes to break times, and when teachers see or interact with children it is when they are in the classroom. Mayeza (2017) pointed out that the

teachers were very strict in in terms of making sure the classroom was policed and making sure that the children could not talk and did their work. What was revealed very powerfully was when the teacher had to leave the classroom for a few minutes and the teacher asked Emmanuel Mayeza if he would take over the class and make sure that the children remained quiet. Yet, the moment the teacher the left the classroom the children started shouting and running rings around Mayeza (2017). It turned out that he had very little authority over the children because they were so used to him in a different context, being friendly and taking an interest in their games of play, so in this context they completely took advantage of Mayeza (2017) and he did not really know what to do or how to respond to children in a classroom setting.

This provides deep insights into ways that children construct adults, and the norm is that adults are viewed by children and others as authority figures, and this was very apparent when it came to Emmanuel Mayeza as they did not treat him like an adult, but rather viewed him as a friend who took an active interest in them.

This has important implications for my research as an older woman researching learners and engaging with them, as Mayeza did. My research, much like Mayeza's (2017) suggests that in particular contexts and circumstances young people may be very open and keen to engage with interested adults about their lives, identities, pleasures and anxieties. In my research, I write about the dynamics of the research encounters, the focus group discussions and the timeline activities I facilitated, and the kinds of relations I established with different students who participated in this. I reflect, too, on how they constructed and related to me as a particular kind of adult.

Chapter 3: Methodology

3.1 Research activities and how these connected with my project aim

My aim in this project was to understand processes of transitioning from childhood to adulthood from the point of view of young people aged 16 and 17, and to this end, I developed methods that sought to encourage high school learners to reflect upon their own experiences and understandings of growing up. I wanted to explore how they positioned themselves, whether as adults or children, or both, and what this meant for them. How did they construct their trajectories from childhood to adulthood? What symbolic markers do they use, if any, of growing up, and were these gendered or classed?

To access these and to provide insights on how young people in my study position themselves in relation to the past (and future) and how they understand and negotiate growing up, I conducted a several research activities in combination with each other. These included focus group discussions and a **timeline activity** that preceded these and helped to precipitate conversational and self-reflective dialogue about 'growing up' in the focus group discussions.

3.2 Timeline Activity

I asked my participants to draw a **Timeline** over the last 5 years of their lives from the age of 11/12 to their current age. In this, I asked them to highlight for each year important moments occurred in their lives.

Rather than taking these timelines as describing a developmental trajectory, as if children are simply adults in the making, I am interested in exploring what insights they provide about how my participants understand, experience and negotiate 'growing up' in particular social contexts marked by gendered, social class and age-related expectations. Adulthood is generally taken-for-granted, assumed to be the symbolic norm, against which childhood (and old age) are constructed as the ageing 'Other' (James and Prout, 1997). In contrast to this, the timeline exercise encouraged my participants to reflect upon what they conceived as salient and significant moments or phases in their lives, and how these connected with processes of identity construction and 'growing up'.

This approach to exploring childhood seeks to engage with children's agency and how they negotiate 'growing up' in an adult-centric and patriarchal society. I draw here on Henderson et al's Inventing adulthoods: a biographical approach to youth transitions. In their study with young people in Northern Ireland (2007), they argue that 'adulthood does not exist but has to be invented' in the sense that it is a 'relational construction' which is in itself produced in opposition to versions of youth and childhood. They introduced a **Timeline exercise** with their participants to explore self- trajectories in relation to what they deemed as significant moments in the past as well as invented moments in their adult futures. The timeline exercise in which their teenage participants engaged comprised, not only selecting and reflecting on moments from their past, but also imagined events in the future and their interests and investments in these.

In Henderson et al's (2007) study, the kinds of events that the young people marked on their timelines as significant or critical moments varied. These critical moments included family-related situations, moving (house, school, town, country), illness and death, as well as occasions associated with schooling (exams and changing schools) (Henderson, 2007: 21). This also included getting to know new groups of people. Rites of passage such as passing a driver's test or

rediscovering religion were also present in the study. Lastly, relationships were a persistent source of critical moments, with a change in friendship circles as well boyfriend/girlfriend relationships (Henderson, 2007: 21).

I conducted a Timeline exercise at the beginning of each focus group discussion, in which I facilitated my research. This proved to be popular and creative, with learners who voiced appreciation for the opportunities it provided for critically reflecting upon themselves especially in relation to the theme of 'growing up'. It also provided a useful introduction to my research and my interests in engaging with learners of their age and their views about 'growing up' and the meanings they attached to this. After conducting the **Timeline exercise** and reflecting upon these with the learners in the different focus groups, I proceeded to introduce certain key themes and posed particular questions in relation to these which aimed to encourage critical self-reflection regarding their experiences and understandings of 'growing up'. These questions also sought to explore how learners negotiated childhood and adulthood with adult care givers at school and at home. (See Appendices on key themes and research questions which I introduced in the focus group discussions, following the discussions precipitated by the **Timeline exercise**)

3.3 Data collection: timeline exercise and focus group discussions

My data collection was conducted using two methods: firstly, the aforementioned Timeline exercise. The timeline exercise not only served as an icebreaker to get to know the young people better but also provided the basis for the focus group discussions about growing up over the last 5/6 years at school and home. The timeline exercise was carefully selected as an activity to put the onus on the young people from the very start of the process to reflect upon themselves and the experiences of 'growing up' as key resources. After drawing their timelines my participants were asked to return to focus groups to which they had been allocated at the beginning of the research to discuss and compare their time lines and the significant moments in their lives which they associated with these. Following the focus group discussions arising from the learner's participation in the timeline exercise in Part 1, I conducted further focus group discussions with the same groups in which I posed more general questions (please see Appendix C). These questions sought to explore how they defined adulthood and childhood and other age-related categories, how

they positioned themselves in relation to these and the attractions and/or perceived costs which they attached to childhood and adulthood.

Asking these questions to the young people generated conversations, where the students took the lead in the discussion and were able to guide the focus group discussion in the direction they preferred, touching on topics that were relevant to the young people themselves.

3.4 Data Analysis

After gathering the data from the aforementioned Timeline exercises as well as the focus group discussions I employed a thematic analysis of the data I had gathered. A thematic analysis is often employed in order to breakdown large quantities of data, which is useful for organizing, summarizing, and for focusing the interpretation of the data (Mills et al, 2010). A widespread variety of sources of information may be used in a thematic analysis, in my case the focus discussions and Timeline exercises were the source of data. My supervisor and I paid close attention to the transcriptions from the focus group discussions as well as the young people's Timelines in order to identify reoccurring themes that emerged from these. We attached particular significance analytically to recurring themes which emerged in these discursive exercises which were put on to the agenda by the participants themselves, rather than the issues I raised when posing initial questions in focus groups.. In total I had over 200 pages worth of transcriptions which I transcribed myself after each focus group discussion. I was careful to transcribe the focus group discussions verbatim and in ways which captured not only what my participants said, but the emotions they conveyed in order to do justice to issues and concerns, pleasures and anxieties which the young people raised, themselves, in the Timeline exercises and the focus group discussions which followed these.

3.5 Limitations and Advantages of conducting focus group discussions

I held three mixed-gender focus group discussions of 9-13 participants each. The first focus group comprised of 3 boys and 10 girls. The second focus group discussion comprised of 3 girls and 6 boys. The third group discussion comprised of 5 boys and 5 girls. It is recommended that the

standard size for a focus group discussion is between 6 to 10 participants (Bryman, 2012: 507). I tried to keep the focus group discussions under 10 participants per group, however, focus group 1 had 13 participants. This was a popular time for students to participate and I did not want to leave anyone out. I wanted relatively small groups to enable each person to share their opinion (Bryman, 2012: 507). Furthermore, larger groups can present a challenge for moderators in regard to responding to participants' comments in the course of focus group discussions sessions and as well as at the analysis stage because of practical complications, such as recognizing the different voices in the transcribing of the sessions. (Bryman, 2012: 508). Also, in smaller groups there may be more opportunities for disagreement and diversity of opinion and less of a tendency for one person to dominate the sessions (Bryman, 2012: 508).

Ironically, one of the limitations linked with conducting focus group discussions concerns the richness of the data such discussions can produce and the difficulties this poses for analysis. (Bryman, 2012: 517). In all 3 of my focus group discussions, my participants were very verbal and had a lot to discuss in regards to all the topics we looked at, often speaking over one another. Due to this there were sometimes parts of the focus groups discussions that were inaudible, which subsequently affects transcription. (Bryman, 2012: 517). This became a limitation to some extent as sometimes two or more participants would speak at the same time, which as mentioned above, made is fairly difficult for me to make sense of what was being said during the transcription (Bryman, 2012: 517). I did ask the participants not to talk at the same time, yet evidently it proved difficult to prevent this from occurring (Bryman, 2012: 517), as the participants had so much to talk about. However, what this demonstrates is how engaged my participants were with the topics they raised and discussed. During the focus group discussions, there was limited time for participants to say everything they wanted to say and discuss as they had to go back to class after our allocated time slots.

I spent close to 20 hours at the school facilitating these focus group discussions. This does not include my interactions with students in the classroom or the school setting, where I hung around the school in order for the participants to familiarise themselves with me before the start of the focus group discussions. I conducted four focus group discussions for each focus group, amounting

to 12 focus group discussion sessions in total for all 3 groups. Each focus group discussion was voice recorded on my cell phone, with consent from the participants as well as their parents.

As I recorded in my research diary when reflecting upon my focus group discussions, my participants were initially quite formal with me and made me feel like a teacher in class. However, this dynamic changed as I encouraged my participants to address me by my first name and not as 'ma'am' and engage in more conversational dialogues. Such a pedagogic relationship was facilitated by my status as an ex-learner at the school to which I constantly referred. Though I was slightly older, I wanted to present myself as a peer to them:

At the start of the interviews the students were quite formal in their interactions with me, they called me 'ma'am' even though I asked them to call me by my name. None of the students spoke out of turn and they even put up their hand when they wanted to ask me a question. After all the students had read their timeline exercises aloud it was time for me to read my timeline exercise over the last 5/6 years of my life. Many of the students were surprised to hear that I had attended the same school as them just 6 years prior. Once the students had learnt that I was a past pupil at the school, who was actually not that much older than them, I could almost feel the atmosphere changing as the young people now viewed me as a sort of peer who understood their experiences as a pupil at the school rather than an outside authority figure.

I observed the participants in relation to the research I was doing, in the sense that I viewed the timeline exercise and the focus group discussions not simply as a means of eliciting information from the young people about growing up etc. Rather I was interested in seeing how the young people/participants in the focus group discussions related to each other and how themes emerged in the timeline exercise and the focus group discussions. The focus group discussions in my research opened up opportunities for students to engage in conversations with each other, often, though not always, facilitated by me. In these conversations, I encouraged my participants to set the agenda and raise and introducing key illustrations relating to their experiences and understandings of 'growing up' which I had not considered when framing my research.

This accorded with a key aim of my research, namely putting the onus on the young people themselves to raise issues and themes relating to the research topic which are particularly significant and relevant to them.

I encouraged the young people/ participants to be catalysts for each other in the focus group discussion and this worked very well. Having relatively diverse groups in terms of gender, race, (if not class), this allowed the participants to listen to other people's experiences of growing up and comparing themselves. I saw my role as facilitator posing pertinent questions and encouraging dialogue between participants. What proved very useful during the focus group discussions was that it produced a dynamic where people were able to reflect and understand different learners' experiences of 'growing up'. Such experiences are often taken for granted, and the learners who participated in conversations in focus groups reflected very positively on the opportunities they had for articulating their experiences and listening to others about 'growing up' and how they constructed and navigated childhood and adulthood.

3.6 Conducting observations

Once I was granted ethical clearance to conduct my research, I arranged and met with the headmaster of the school in the Western Cape. During my meeting with him, I explained the purpose of my research as well as what methods I would use to conduct my research. I needed to explain why I wanted to conduct observations as I would need to walk around the school as well as sit in on classes to observe the students, thus I had to gain his support regarding this.

My reasoning for conducting observations was two-fold. Firstly, the main purpose of the observations was to get a sense of the students' everyday lives at schools, so that when we had discussions in the focus groups I would have a better understanding of what the students were referring to for example classes and subjects and how the young people (students at the school) interacted with each other as well as with teachers in the school.

Secondly, I wanted the students to become used to me being in the school setting before I started conducting the focus group discussions. I made sure to sit at a desk in class with the students,

participating as a student instead of being an additional adult in the classroom space. I made sure to chat with the students and I addressed the teachers as 'Mr' / 'Ms' or 'Mrs' in order for students to view me more as a friend or peer rather than an adult at the school. This worked well as the students were comfortable chatting to me during the focus group discussions as they had already familiarized themselves with me. Furthermore, when analysing the data generated during my focus group discussions, I was interested in focusing not just on what my participants said but also how they said it. I was able to keep track of this by keeping diary notes based on observations of group dynamics in the focus groups discussions.

3.7 Introducing myself and my research to learners and teachers

After I had been granted permission from the headmaster to conduct my research and explained my research interest and topic to the staff, it was time to engage with learners about being a part of my research. I was given a time slot by the school secretary to explain my research to the grade 10 and 11students (aged 16-17) and to recruit potential participants. I explained my research interests in a clear and straight forward manner, emphasizing that I wanted to hear what they, as learners, had to say about 'growing up' and what this meant for them. I introduced myself as an ex-learner in their school and explained that I would be at the school for the next few months, getting to know and conducting my research with learners.

My research, I said, was motivated by concerns which learners of their age may experience about transitioning from childhood to adulthood, and the associations they make in regards to childhood and adulthood. I emphasised that the focus of my research was on them, 'young people' themselves, and that I sought in my research to engage with them as experts on this topic. To this end, I explained, I would be facilitating group discussions about them and their views and experiences. This, I said, was in contrast to the majority of research surrounding young people, which has often tended to be from the point of view of adults and not the young people themselves. In my research, I stressed that I wanted young people to have a voice and that I wanted to hear and learn from them about their anxieties, pressures and pleasures in growing up. I emphasized that it was their turn to be heard.

I have taken an extract from my research diary which I wrote when reflecting on my first arranged meeting with learners and potential research participants in my research. This provides an account of the impact this made on them and their keenness to participate in such a research exercise which sought to position them, 'the learners', as the experts.

"As I was explaining my research, I could see the look on the students faces changing, some were smiling, some looked intrigued and others looked focused. As soon as I was done introducing myself and my research the students clapped for me and one of the teachers said that if any of the students were interested in my research that they should come and collect a consent form for their parents to fill out and sign before the start of my focus group discussions. Many of the students came up to me and explained that they loved the concept of my research and that they were excited to be a part of it and have their voices heard. One of the girls even explained to me that she felt as though adults and teachers always had the last say and she couldn't wait to share her experiences with me, she honestly seemed shocked that I was so interested in hearing what the young people had to say as it was not what she was used to. Another student came up to me at the end of the introduction session and she explained that she was interested in becoming a sociologist and if I would give her some advice. We exchanged numbers and I said I was here to chat any time if she needed any help or advice. "

However, in spite of the interest many learners showed in my research project, very few learners filled in the necessary consent forms for their parents to sign granting permission to participate in my research. Below, I quote again from my diary.

"Over a week had passed [since my presentation to the learners] and not one of the learners had handed in their form and I started to panic that no one would partake in my focus groups. The teachers and grade heads sent out numerous reminders but there was still no response. I chatted to my liaison at the school, a school psychologist who headed the senior school Social Development Unit and she arranged for me to meet with one of the heads of the English department. This teacher indicated that my research had an important pedagogic value, specifically in encouraging critical self- reflection. The teacher in question immediately sent out

emails inviting all the English teachers to meet the next day to brainstorm ideas with me in order to get the young people interested in participating in my study.

The English teachers were very helpful suggesting I should have more time to conduct focus group discussions, and very kindly offering lesson times for me to complete the focus group discussions. They were happy to offer their lesson times to me, they said, was because they felt my research was important and that the young people would have lots to share during the focus group discussions. We told the learners that if they took part in my study then they would miss class for that lesson and I would provide the students with snacks and treats. From that point on many learners were keen to participate.

It was clear that one of the reasons the students were pleased about the prospect of participating in my research was to miss class time. However, once the focus group discussions had started and the young people started actually participating in my research, their keenness to participate was motivated by other factors, notably their interest in reflecting critically upon themselves and engaging with other learners."

3.8 Putting myself in the picture

Influenced by pro-feminist writers such as Oakley (1981) and Thomson et al (2007) and Robertson and Pattman (2018), I am critical of popular understandings of forms of social research as instruments for extracting information from individuals. Research informed by these assumptions not only reinforces power relations between researchers and researched, but also presents the researcher as a figure who is relatively detached. In stark contrast to this, I view research events, such as focus group discussions, as social encounters in which researchers and researched establish certain kinds of relations which influences, crucially, how they present themselves and what they say. This means that when writing up research as a social encounter it is vital to 'put the researcher in the picture' (Pattman, 2015) and the kinds of relations established with the researched. I write about how I presented myself as a researcher, below *as I quote from my research diary*, in relation to my participants and how they related to me.

When students first walked past me on the school grounds, they would formally greet me by the name 'Ma'am'. I quickly made a mental note to myself to break down the young people's walls in order for them to trust and relate to me. In the first English class I attended the English teacher introduced me to the class and he insisted that the students in his class should refer to me as 'Ms Dare'. I felt my heart sink as I felt that by the students calling me 'Ms Dare' put me in juxtaposition to the young people and positioned me as a figure of authority. I held my tongue as I didn't want to create the impression that I was an equal to the teacher, I rather wanted the young people to see me as a sort of peer to the young people.

As soon as the focus group discussions started I emphasized the fact that I would like them to refer to me by my first name, ‚Jade, and I also pointed out that they were going to be the experts in my research and that I would like them to bring up topics that are relevant to them and what they would like to discuss regarding growing up. I experienced my participants opening up to me and seeing me almost as a friend. Furthermore, they saw me as an insider who had attended the same school as them and therefore (like them) knew the teachers and the school.

At first, the students were quite shy and wary of me but they opened up when I shared some of my personal experiences of being at the same school as them. They felt as though I understood and related to them like some of their current teachers by being relaxed and trying to create an open and non-judgmental space which allowed them the opportunity to speak and voice their opinions. The conversations we had were serious and thought-provoking but also punctuated by laughter. The focus groups provided opportunities for my 16- 17-year-old participants to reflect on their views and understandings of childhood and adulthood. Such reflections were not descriptive monologues but were creative and provocative, as if the learners were learning about themselves through responding to the kinds of questions I posed and the discussion this generated.

This was supported in the very positive students' reflections on participating in the research. Many of the students reported how interesting they found the research and how in some cases it raised important issues they had not considered but which they found very pertinent. *S*imilar kinds of reflections have been reported by young people in other participatory research studies which seek to engage with young people as active agents (see eg. Frosh et al, 2002) as if such research provides

them with unusual opportunities to reflect on their everyday lives and how they categorize themselves and others.

I participated with my learner participants in the Timeline exercise and wrote and shared my own Timeline with them (after they had presented theirs'). Indeed, one of the main reasons that I conducted the Timeline exercise early on, was, that it gave the participants a chance to get to know me and for me to get to know them in relatively informal ways. The Timeline exercise was also intended to convey messages to the young women and men in my research about my perceived role of them as active participants to put the onus on them to set the agenda and encourage them to reflect critically upon themselves.

My pleas to my participants to engage with me as a peer or friend did not fall on deaf ears and this was apparent in the relatively informal ways that they addressed me and the language they used. The following separate excerpts show the type of language and swearing the young people used around me once that started to feel more comfortable with me:

Mason: Ja, that's true like on hockey tour we did do much like stuff like you just rock up to the place and we are like crap we only have like 10 minutes to warm up and we are like crap but we just do it and then like play. (focus group 1)

Penny: No, that scares the crap out of me. (focus group 1)

Thus, I worked with the assumption that how people present themselves and what they say in research encounters depends very much on how they construct the researcher, and tried to present myself as a friendly person who wanted to engage with them as authorities and experts about the topic of research. I tried to create the impression that I was a friend and not a figure of authority, for example reassuring my participants that we were not that different in terms of age. This, as some of the learners in my study, told me after I had conducted the research, enabled them to feel comfortable enough to share their views with me about 'growing up'. Some of participants also commented on the 'fun' they had engaging in activities such as the Timeline exercise and participating in Focus Groups with their fellow learners about issues which were of 'interest' to them.

3.9 Advantages and disadvantages of being an 'insider'

As previously mentioned, being an ex-learner at the school seemed to facilitate the connections the learners who participated in my study and I were able to make. Thus, we shared stories about Trudge and our experiences at the school, often laughing about similarities that we experienced at school even though I matriculated 6 or 7 years before most of the students.

However, being perceived by my research participants as an 'insider' posed problems for me as a researcher as I wanted to explore how my participants constructed and experienced their everyday social worlds in particular shared contexts like schools. The young people in my study did not feel much need to reflect and elaborate on these unless I asked them precisely to do so because they assumed familiarity on the part of me as the researcher. (Pattman, 2015). Indeed, when asking the learners in my study to elaborate on school activities and events such as 'Trudge' and why they had included this in their 'Timelines' I sometimes asked them to imagine I was an outsider who had never experienced their school before to encourage them to speak more about these. I also suggested to my participants in the focus group discussions that schools change and that I needed them to 'spell out' aspects of school life to me which shed light on their experiences of 'growing up'.

Being a previous student at the school came with its fair share of problems and obstacles. For example, in all 3 focus group discussions the young people expected and assumed that as an ex-learner in their school I was already aware of informal institutional cultures and practices in the school which impacted their everyday lives. Sometimes I caught myself taking for granted some of the discussions we had about the school and therefore missing out on opportunities to gain a deeper understanding through further questioning.

3.10 Trustworthiness and rigour

Trustworthiness is an essential concept in qualitative research (Given, 2008). In order to ensure the trustworthiness of a qualitative study four concepts need to be employed, namely: 1) Credibility, or internal validity, seeks to ensure that one's study measures or tests what they actually intended to test (Shenton, 2004). 2) transferability, or external validity addresses the degree to which a findings of a particular study can be applied to additional situations 3) dependability refers to the situation that if the study was repeated in the exact same context with the identical methods and participants one would get the same results and 4) confirmability, which guarantees that the findings and the interpretations match the data and the viewpoints of the research participants, not the views of the researcher (Shenton, 2004).

In order to ensure transferability in my own research I will provide a detailed description of how I gathered my data. I also provide detailed accounts of my participants in terms of their age, social class backgrounds and schooling as well as their interests and their definitions and concerns relating to 'growing up'. In order to establish credibility of my study I situate my study (in the literature review) in relation to other studies which engage with and exemplify Social Constructionist understandings childhood and adulthood. In order to ensure dependability of my study I clarify how the different parts of my study, such as the research design, methodology, participants, as well as forms of data collection and analysis intersect.

I want to make it clear, however that in taking these measures to situate my research in the context of a wider research community and promoting 'transferability', I am not seeking to minimize my role and identity as a particular researcher. Following the work of feminist researchers, such as Oakley (1998), I reflect upon my own presence in the process of doing research and how this influences the relationships I establish with my participants and their narrative accounts of 'growing up', childhood, youth and adulthood. I became interested in practicing reflexivity in critical ways which opened up my research for sociological analysis. I became interested in how they constructed me, and what insights this offered about them.

3.11 Ethical considerations

My thesis rigorously adhered to the four main areas of ethical principles, in social research. These involved no harm to participants, informed consent, respect of privacy and no deception (Bryman, 2012: 135). All the participants who agreed to partake in the study were presented with a consent form that clarified the purpose and processes associated with the study. Since all of my participants were younger than 18 years of age and considered minors, I had to gain permission from each parent/ guardian in order for the students to partake in my study. Furthermore, because the participants were considered minors, I used pseudonyms so that no-one's name was mentioned or recognizable so that each participant remained anonymous.

I gained permission from all the participants to record the focus group discussions to do justice to what the participants had said whilst writing up their contributions I transcribed the recordings and it was kept on a file on my laptop. The file was kept in such a manner that it was not identifiable, as there was no identifiable information on the files. Additionally, my laptop, as well as the file, was protected by a password at all times. The focus group guide attached as appendix C shows the types of questions that the participants were asked during the focus group discussions. However, the majority of the questions posed were ones that were in response to issues raised by the participants themselves. I also asked that the young people in the focus group discussion kept what was said confidential. I made it clear that participants were allowed to at any point withdraw from the study if they felt uncomfortable. Moreover, there would be no expectations in relation to responding to every question and if they did not want to respond, they were free to leave at any given time.

All focus group discussions and study procedures were disclosed to the participants to prevent any deception (Bryman, 2012: 143). If any participant or the school in question requests it, I am more than happy to present my findings to the participants in order to give them feedback and to further discuss the significant issues highlighted in the research if need be. I also want to argue for the ethical importance of doing this kind of research on growing up and enabling conversations which raise questions about growing up and how young people view themselves and adult caregivers both at home and school.

'Ethics' is often equated in university-based research with 'harm minimization'. This is, in my view, an extremely important consideration. It is important to ensure that research participants, and, especially young people, who may experience vulnerabilities and anxieties when interviewed about their lives and 'growing up' are provided forms of protection and care.

However, I also want to argue for ways of conceptualizing 'Ethics' in research in social studies which raises questions about how research may benefit the lives of the researched in general and children in particular. Such a consideration is informed by my own participatory research with young people which encouraged voices to them and promoted critical reflection and was recognized by the English teachers in the school as adding 'pedagogic value' and, as reported in the concluding chapter, Chapter 5 received very positive feedback from learners who participated in this research.

Chapter 4: Presentation and analysis of Findings

In this chapter, I report and address my findings as they relate to the Timeline exercise and the focus group discussions in which I asked my participants to engage.

I engage, in Part 1 of this chapter, with the Timeline exercise, the key themes which emerged in these and how these precipitated discussions on considerations with my participants about 'growing up'. In Part 2 of this chapter, I pose more general questions about how they construct and experience growing up at home and school and how they position themselves in relation to childhood and adulthood.

Chapter 4, part 1: The Timeline exercise: significant markers and moments

As discussed in chapter 3 I asked the participants to draw a Timeline over the past 5 years (which for them spanned from ages 11/12 to 16/17 and to highlight important moments in their lives along this Timeline. In the beginning of the exercise, it was apparent that some of the students were hesitant regarding what they should include in the Timeline and what was appropriate to put in the Timeline. I was careful not to provide examples of what the participants might want to include and encouraged them to highlight moments in their lives that were specifically significant to them and which heralded changes in their lives. Such changes were often associated (in positive and negative ways) with growing up, and were addressed by the participants in conversations they had about these as if they were features and signifiers of growing up.

The following is a presentation based on the Timelines that my participants drew, with specific emphasis on what they themselves used as markers of age in the ways that they constructed and experienced growing up and transitioning from childhood to adulthood. In the Timeline exercise, I did not ask the learners direct questions with regards to 'growing up'. Rather, I asked them only to write down significant moments in their lives from the last 5/6 years up until the present.

These emerged as key themes in the more recent years in their Timelines and were raised and discussed by learners in the three focus groups:

1) Increasing academic pressures
2) Travelling abroad,
3) Their first boyfriend/girlfriend experiences,
4) Reflections on TRUDGE (the school's 'rite of passage' initiative)
5) Increasing school sporting commitments, especially for boys

4.1.1. Theme 1: Increasing Academic Pressures

In their Timelines and notably in their current school year, Grade 10, many students specified taking their academic results more 'seriously'. In contrast to earlier years in their 'Timelines' in their lives over the past 5/6 years. Many of the student participants associated grade 10 with increasing pressures to succeed academically and accruing responsibilities to adhere to an academic work ethic.

13 students across all 3 focus group discussions, specified experiencing increasing amounts of academic pressure. When discussing this the young people in my study explained that Grade 10 was a very important year for them academically precisely because this was when they were expected to prepare and orientate themselves to relatively privileged futures. This was the year where students choose specific subjects to focus on which opened up possibilities, for them, of experiencing tertiary education in high status universities. Thus, academic work seemed to carry a much higher profile for them in grade 10 than previous grades.

These students were acutely aware that if they did not start working hard from Grade 10 onwards then they would not be able to get into a good university and would therefore not live a 'successful' adult life as they would not be able to get a decent job without a degree from university/ tertiary institution.

In the discussion which arose from the Timeline exercise and the particular focus on increasing academic pressures in the school, specifically their Grade 10 year, the participants elaborated on the sudden significance and importance attached to academic work in this year and the impact and pressures this exerted on them.

One of the students, as we see in extracts from the focus group discussion below, even went as far as to say that she experiences stomach aches and problems due to the stress of academic pressure and wanting to perform well in her assessments at school:

Mason: Um, and then in Grade 10 I started to feel academic pressure (Group 1)

Liam: In Grade 10, ja, I didn't do that well in school so I started to take it like really seriously and started to study more. (Group 1)

Abby: Oh I made the spirit portfolio this term and I went to the doctor 3 times in one week which is more than I have ever been to because I don't know what it was but there was something wrong with my stomach and it was just weird because I think it was just stress because I've been quite stressed because in Grade 8 and 9 I just completely chilled with like work and like this year [Grade 10]I was like ok this is kind of serious so I have to work. (Group 1)

Kaira: ...And then went to Grade 10, completely screwed it up, subject choice, all of that, messed with my mind, so I kind of struggled finding my subjects and stuff, because I kept changing all the time. And then also finding a balance in my life between social life and schoolwork and getting involved in the school and all that type of stuff. And then I dropped French… I kind of have an idea of what I want to do in the future. And just trying to handle the pressure of just actually being considered as a young adult, and just going into life (Group 3)

Significantly it was the young people, themselves, who raised major concerns and anxieties about increasing academic pressures and demands which they recorded on the most recent year in the Timeline exercise. Furthermore, this was spoken about by my participants as an inevitable feature of 'growing up', as Kelly, so powerfully articulates in the extract below. As already mentioned, my participants were strongly invested in focusing on academic work in order to fulfil expectations from teachers and parents to proceed to universities with high academic reputations. But it seemed from the Timeline exercise that it was only in Grade 10 that such academic expectations and

pressures to succeed only became a concrete reality for them and a symbolic feature of 'growing up.'

Kelly: Because in Grade 11 everyone is telling us our marks really count and that we have to work really hard this year, and it's just making me realise all these things that are actually going to happen that you have to work hard for, you don't have time to just mess around anymore and that is all part of growing up. (Group 1)

The participants explained that up until Grade 10 excelling in academics was not the number one priority for them. However, once the young people hit Grade 10, which they explained went hand in hand with selecting specific subject choices, they reported on experiencing large amounts of stress due to the increase of the importance they were now putting on performing well in academic subjects. The students explained that the increase in academic pressure was an indicator that they were growing up and maturing precisely because their studies were not put at the forefront of the priority list until Grade 10.

4.1.2 Theme 2: Travelling Abroad

25 learners across all three focus group discussions mentioned travelling overseas and navigating the airports as significant moments in the Timeline exercise for recent years. When elaborating on this, they mentioned going on overseas trips organized by the school, and the responsibilities accorded to them for organising the logistics for these trips. These included organising their accommodation, transport and food, as illustrated in the following extract from one of the focus group discussions.

Rebecca: …Um, I went skiing in Switzerland and then in Grade 8… then in Grade 9 I went to Switzerland again, then me and Tracey went to Borneo on world Challenge. Ja, so it was a group of us but we had one teacher that came with us. (Group 2)

Jade: What is that?

Rebecca: So, it's a world challenge and you go to a place like Thailand or Vietnam but we went to Borneo which is in Malaysia and then we just went and helped…It's kind of like community service and then we went hiking in the rain forests and it was insane, ja. (Group 2)

One of the other girls called out "You organize transport, accommodation…"

Rebecca: Ja, you have to handle your own money and budget everything yourself. (Group 2)

Jade: Wow that's really incredible!

Rebecca: Ja, it was wow! Like crazy! You have to budget everything (Emphasizing this point very in a very serious manner). Then I went to Mauritius, then I went on Trudge, then I went to Switzerland. Now in 2019, well Grade 10 I went to Switzerland… ja. (Group 2)

The above references of going abroad and organizing their own travel, whether this involved knowing how to get around the airport on their own, how to sign forms and how to handle money were taken as exemplars of growing up and becoming mature. This was made very clear by Tracey in her contribution to this discussion in which she reflected on a school trip to Borneo and how this, she argued, *"actually made [her] become more of an adult"(see below)*

Tracey: But I think like, going to Borneo and flying alone and trying to navigate the airports and stuff actually made me become more of an adult because I was sort of in this situation where you had to be independent. And you have to just take responsibility for yourselves. (group 2)

What was particularly significant about these narratives on travelling abroad in promoting independence and denoting maturity was how common they were. Indeed, so common were they that such experiences seemed to be presented as a norm for young girls and boys who reach Grade 10 in this school. They address, implicitly, one of my main research questions namely, *how classed is "growing up in and out of school'?* Clearly, the participants in my study from this private school experienced growing up in very privileged ways, facilitated by financial and cultural capital, at

home and school. Yet the relatively privileged lifestyles which they drew upon when providing examples of 'growing up' were not recognized or articulated by them as privileged. As Pierre Bourdieu (1999) argues, social class inequalities are reproduced partly through economic capital that wealthier parents are able to invest in their children, economically and through cultural capital accrued through opportunities made available to them such as negotiating airports and travelling abroad.

4.1.3 Theme 3: First boyfriend and girlfriend experiences

The theme of first boyfriend and girlfriend experiences was a common one, which emerged during the Timeline exercise, specifically in regards to their Grade 8 year at school, which happened to be their first year of high school. This particular theme was raised by 12 learners in the Timeline exercise and discussed in each of the 3 focus groups discussions. The discussions they had on this topic were animated and punctuated with laughter and strongly intimated that these young people identified as sexual beings in the sense that they recognized and experienced sexual desires and the particular forms this took and ways this was expressed or not expressed in and outside school with their peers, as is evidenced in the extracts below:

Mason: "I went on my first date in Grade 8..." (Group 1)

John: "And then in Grade 8 I had my first girlfriend… and I also had my first break- up." (Group 2)

Rebecca:" … Same as Andrew I got my first boyfriend (laughing and giggling). (Whole group is laughing) So ja that lasted about 2 weeks and I never had a boyfriend again (more giggling)." (Group 2)

Carmen: …and then in Grade 11 I know it's really weird but I went on my first date (giggling awkwardly). (Group 1)

The topic of these conversations, and the interest these provoked amongst participants strongly supports the idea that young people of their age are sexual beings, and undermines a long tradition

(to which I referred in Chapter 2) of teachers in schools denying this by infantilizing learners and projecting 'innocence' upon them or enforcing unitary codes and structures which particularly penalize young women for their dress or hanging about with young men (Pattman & Bhana, 2017). Not only do such sex educational practices deny that young people are sexual beings but deny same sex sexual desires. (Francis, 2017)

Though it is very apparent that these young people are sexual beings, in the sense that they experience sexual desires and converse with each other about boyfriend and girlfriend relationships, their constant giggling indicated that they were slightly shy or embarrassed to share information about their love lives or breakups. It is also possible that in some instances that giggling and laughter could be used to evade discussing certain topics that make one feel awkward.

Even though the students seemed comfortable talking about relationships in a group context, when it came to talking about sexual or love relationships concerning themselves in the setting of 'sexual' relationships, then it cultivated giggling and laughter. In the context of the HIV/AIDS pandemic Life Orientation initiatives were introduced in African countries, in the context of the HIV/AIDS pandemic which drew on pedagogic concerns, to retain the agency of young men and women as sexual beings, and inspire an environment where young people can reflect on the significance and meanings which they attach to gender and sexuality in their lives generally. However, the subject of young people and sexuality is still very much defended by cultural taboos regarding adults and young people conversing about sexuality and by adult constructions of children, (as non-sexual beings). For the young people I interviewed 'growing up' meant being old enough to go on dates with people and have a 'real' relationship that included breakups. But to what extent were such conversations facilitated by teachers in the school in Life Orientation or other programs aimed at encouraging students in supportive and non- judgmental ways to reflect on sexuality and growing up?

In discussions about this with my participants, certain teachers were mentioned as being open to teaching the topic of sexuality. These tended to be with Tutors, who were allocated responsibility for looking after the academic and social welfare with a small group of learners. Most intimated that they did not feel as though Life Orientation was a platform that they could share their opinions

relating to sexuality openly, even though they did discuss boyfriend and girlfriend relationships in the focus group discussions I had with them.

A few of the students themselves thought it was 'awkward' or 'uncomfortable' to talk about sexuality as they explained that the school had a LGBTQI club which was where they could speak about sexuality. While it can be commended that there is a safe space for young people to express their sexuality, it is important that young people feel that they can chat to teachers or a trusting adult about the above topics. It is our responsibility as a society to give young people a voice to feel heard and proud of who they are regardless of race, sexuality or sexual orientation (Francis, 2017). It may be that some of my participants presumed that when I asked them if sexuality was addressed in Life Orientation and other school programs that I meant sexual orientation and same sex desire.

4.1.4 Theme 4: Reflections on TRUDGE (the school's 'rite of passage' initiative)

The most common memorable moment which participants wrote on their Timelines for any one year over the past five was the school's initiative Trudge to which I referred in Chapter 2. This is a 27- day journey where single-sex groups of students walk, cycle and canoe over 360km. All learners in Grade 9, in their first year in 'Senior School' are expected to undertake this physical metaphorical journey in teams, and all the school participants in my study had completed Trudge the previous year. 23 participants mentioned this as a memorable moment in the Timeline exercise.

The school presents Trudge, with much pride, as a teaching and learning experience for Grade 9 learners through which they develop certain values and responsibilities which it associates with leadership qualities and growing up. In the school brochure, Trudge is presented as a special time of reflection, adventure and mental, spiritual and physical growth – a true rite of passage.

This rite of passage, in Grade 9 was understood and experienced by some of the learners as marking the end of their junior position in high school and preparing them for their introduction into the senior grades of the school and the academic responsibilities this entailed.

The importance and significance my participants attached to Trudge in the Timeline exercise provides insights on how the school as well as the young people participating in my study construct 'becoming mature' and what this entails. Below I draw on extracts from my focus group discussions with my participants on why they referred to Trudge as a key moment in their Timeline exercise, and whether and how they linked this with growing up.

Liam: In Grade 9 I went on Trudge and that was really nice because I ja as you said I made a lot of friends with people I thought I would never make friends with. (Group 1)

Kaira: ...then Grade 9, [Trudge], that was amazing. I kind of had an identity crisis, because that was considered the right of passage, you go there, you find yourself, then you're good. And then I was like, "Okay, cool, I know myself." (Group 3)

Mary: After Trudge I definitely like feel like most of us grew up or matured. We gained a bit of independence I guess because we didn't have our parents there to cook for us and look after us like we usually do, we really had to be responsible and rely on ourselves to get through Trudge, and we don't normally have to do that [rely on ourselves] because our parents do so much for us. (Group 2)

All the learners who referred to Trudge as a memorable moment in Grade 9 in the Timeline exercise were very positive about it, for example referring to the opportunities it provided for making new friends, and some, such as Mary, associated this with becoming more mature, which she linked with becoming less reliant on their parents for domestic support. Kaira's take on Trudge was interesting as Trudge is almost seen as a 'rite of passage' to becoming a fully-fledged member of the school. It is the one activity that all students who are older than Grade 9 have in common with each student at the school.

One young woman, Samantha in Group 2, suggested that 'growing up' and becoming more 'mature' was gendered, in so far as this was exemplified by girls more than boys. Indeed, she argued that Trudge impacted more on the views and aspirations of boys than girls precisely because

girls who participated in Trudge already demonstrated high levels of maturity and social responsibility in contrast to boys.

Samantha: Ok so compared to Trudge I think the boys matured far more, we were always mature but the boys from grade 9 to know have definitely matured hugely. (Group 2)

The gendering of 'maturity', and the presumption that girls mature more quickly than boys emerged as a key theme in the focus group discussions, and was raised almost exclusively by girls. Previously the boys would run around at break disturbing teachers and girls by almost running into them. They often took ages to settle down before classes and would slam their bags on the desk to make as much noise as possible. Many of the girls explained, throughout the focus group discussions, that girls had many more responsibilities than boys both at home and school. Teachers and parents, they claimed, put pressure on girls to act more 'mature' in terms of their responsibilities such as helping with dinner and looking after siblings at home, and sitting down and being quiet and ready to do work at school.

The gendering of 'maturity', as presented by many girls in my study is indeed a common finding in school-based research with boys and girls and their relations with each other, and to illustrate, I draw on Young Masculinities (Frosh et al, 2002) in Chapter 2 of this thesis, and the pleasures which 11–14-year-old boys attending schools in London derived from 'revelling' in being immature, by accusing and teasing girls for being, in their view, overly mature.

4.1.5 Theme 5: increasing school sporting commitments especially for boys

Sporting commitments especially in school emerged as an important theme in the Timeline exercise, especially for boys. Sport seemed like a very important theme for both boys and girls, but more significantly for boys.

For the girls, it was a theme that was mostly highlighted in the 'Grade 7' section of the Timeline exercise, their last year in primary school. A total of seven girls mentioned sport as a significant moment for their Grade 7 year, whereas only 4 girls in total spoke about sport being a significant

factor for them during high school. Almost double the number of boys spoke about sport as being a significant moment/activity in their lives from Grade 7 through high school. It was noticeable, too, that the boys took considerable pride in what they described as their sporting achievements and the amount of hard work they expended in pursuing these. Though none of the boys referred to themselves as more 'mature for playing sport, nevertheless sport seemed to be invoked by the boys as a signifier for growing up as boys and men, with some of the boys taking particular pride in playing for school, district and national teams, and being so good as to play on teams dominated by boys older than them.

Mason, one of the young male students in my study had the following to say about sport in grade 7, which indicated the end of his primary schools days:

Mason: … *In grade 7 I started taking school sport seriously, specifically cricket, I worked really hard at it as I wanted to make 1st team cricket in high school, but I know that it is quite difficult to make 1st team cricket when you are not in the older grades like grade 10, 11 and 12… Um I carried on taking sport really seriously and went on first team cricket tour with Matrics so it was really quite cool just to see the older guys and improve on it [Cricket]* (Mason sounds very proud as he tells the focus group that he made 1st team cricket when he was only in grade 9) . *(Group 1)*

Liam: And then in grade 11 I finally made the first team tennis after a long time and I have been working hard since then. (group 1)

Greg: In 2017 I made the Boland hockey team. And then in 2018 I made the SA hockey team and went to Holland on Tour. I also went on Trudge and then I made the Boland 1st team. And then in 2019 I made the second team for club and then I am on the squad list for SA.(Group 1)

Ryan: In grade eight I made debuts for first team cricket and tennis. Because I think they were short of players or something, but I am still so grateful I made the team, I mean I've played my first few games and it was really cool (says it with a sense of pride) (Group 3)

David: In grade seven I had my biggest achievement from them was when I got my black belt that I've been working on since pre-grade one. So I got that in grade seven (cross talk)I am the youngest ever (Group 3)

The girls, however, who referred to sport on their Tmelines mentioned their achievements , for their Grade 7 year specifically, but none of them explicitly mentioned working extra hard to achieve these. The following examples are what the girls throughout all 3 focus group discussions had to say about sport:

Abby: "Grade 7, hockey and netball which was U13A" (Group 1)

Carmen: "Grade 7 I was also U13 hockey and netball tour. I also made Boland hockey team" (Group 1)

Rebecca: "Ok so in grade 7 my hockey team won top schools, so it's like all the hockey teams in the Western Cape and then we came first." (Group 2)

Rachel: "Okay, so in 2015 I went on my hockey and netball tour for my school" (Group 3)

It could be argued that sport was invoked by boys as a medium that offered them opportunities of growing up and excelling as young men beyond primary school (see Frosh et al, 2002 and Connell, 1995). Significantly in my study some of the girls who were critical of the ways boys dominated playground spaces and saw this as a sign of immaturity nevertheless envied the opportunities they had for engaging in sporting activities in the playground which were unofficially denied to girls by virtue of gendered expectations.

I elaborate upon boys' playground activities and how these are understood and presented by girls and boys in Part 2 of Chapter 4 in a section headed: *High expectations placed on girls to be more mature*

Chapter 4, Part 2: Presentation and analysis of findings

The Timeline exercise, and the group discussions these provoked, encouraged my participants to think about childhood and adulthood as socially constructed rather than biologically given categories. This helped prepare them to respond to more direct questions which I put later to them in the focus group discussions about how they identified and positioned themselves in relation to adulthood and childhood. For example, I posed questions about how they would define themselves, whether as children, adults or both, and what, for them, it means to be a child or an adult or somewhere in between.

Such questions provoked critical reflection, as illustrated in thoughtful responses and dialogue which ensued in which my participants engaged with the complexity of sharing qualities and identifications which they attributed both to adults and children. How they constructed particular signifiers of adulthood (such as 'big life' experiences) and childhood (such as 'relying on parents') and positioned themselves in relation to these, was fluid and dependant, as we see in the following dialogue from Focus Group 1, on social context.

4.2.1 Question: Would you define yourself as a child or an adult or maybe both?

Penny: I think for me a child because even though we think we are so old; we are actually like really young. Like the first hopefully quarters of our lives we are still in if you know what I mean? So, like we are actually so young, like we've barely gone through big life experiences if you know what I mean? And everything we learn now is like changing us for when we become an adult. (Group 1)

Jade: What sort of big life experiences are you talking about? (Group 1)

Penny: Like when you get your first job and you have to… you know like that's all coming. Like work for yourself, like you need to rely on yourself. Like now we rely our parents financially and stuff. (Group 1)

Carmen: In a way I think we feel like we are adults, because right now with school and stuff we feel like we have so much to do deal with and it's really important and we feel like we are I don't know adults almost. But then like I said we are actually not. Like this is actually the easiest part of our life like school everything's sort of given to us right now. Like obviously schoolwork is hard but like it's just going to get harder, not necessarily worse but it is going to get harder. (Group 1)

Mason: I feel sometimes we feel like the adults because we get like really involved and then every now and again the adults or your parents say something that they've experienced and you are like 'woah' you know is better. (Group 1)

The complexity and uncertainty of being children or adults was captured in the above dialogue, with participants alternating between the two as sources of identification. While Penny identifies as a child, using chronological age and absence of 'big life experiences as signifiers of this, she also acknowledges that 'we think we are so old.' Reflecting on the pressures of academic work, Carmen says, "we feel like we are adults' because 'we have so much to deal with", yet also claims that "actually we are not" because "everything's sort of given to us right now" in school. The above examples illustrate that many of the participants still felt as though they were a child due to the many life experiences that they argued they still needed to have such as getting their first job. They also felt that being reliant on their parents for financial and physical support positioned them as still children.

4.2.1.1 The gendering of growing up

But some participants, all-female, mentioned taking on caring responsibilities in the home, and notably looking after younger siblings, which they associated with being adult-like. When I asked my participants whether they would define themselves as children or adults or maybe both, a number of them in the focus group discussions, mainly girls, admitted to feeling much more grown-up when taking care of their younger siblings. They felt as though they were responsible for their younger siblings and therefore acted more mature and grown-up, presenting themselves almost as a figure of authority towards their younger siblings, as illustrated in the following, all-female dialogue from Group 1.

Carmen: I feel that when I'm with my brother I feel like an adult, so he's in Grade 7 and he's not young but like when it comes to like waking him up for breakfast or something or like looking after him, like I think my parents are going away next week and like we are at home alone for a week and I'm going to have to be like an adult for the week. But like I still feel like a kid at heart, like if people are playing on-on [tag] and stuff I immediately want to play. (Group 1)

Abby: I think it's kind of weird because like people always say when you become an adult you are like oh my gosh this is so scary like you don't feel like an adult your whole life. Like I know my sister… like this is so stupid but I used to be scared of the dark. So like if I need something and we have this like outside room thing and I used to always ask my parents to come with me because it's like where all the laundry gets done and like now if my sister needs something from there I have to like pretend I'm not scared… you know what I mean (laughing) I'm just like to my sister oh my gosh come and as an adult you could still be scared of the dark but you have to act like you're not. So, you never really feel like an adult when it comes, so I feel like the child feeling never goes away. (Group 1)

Jade: Do you help look after her quite a bit? (Group 1)

Abby: Ja. (Group 1)

Jade: Do you think looking after younger children makes you feel more like an adult? (Group 1)

Abby: Yes, definitely because you have to help them with everything they need. I think that's almost like when you're a parent, like when they draw something and it's so bad and you always have to say it's good. But I was so surprised because when you watch movies and a child draws something and the adults say like that's so good and it's just like the worst drawing (Laughing). But then now like when my sister it was so bad but because it's my sister and I was like oh wow that's actually really good (very sweet voice while she talks about her baby sister) and I just thought that's how parents must feel. (Group 1)

Significantly the theme of older siblings caring for younger siblings was raised and discussed in my study by girls, not boys, and pertained only to older girls caring for younger siblings (whether girls or boys). Further the role of caring for younger siblings was associated in these girls' accounts with 'growing up' and accruing social responsibilities which they linked with adulthood. Interestingly, these girls learnt to sacrifice their own needs and interests in caring for their siblings and this involved pretending to like their drawings or being unafraid of going into dark rooms.

When asked whether she felt looking after younger children made her feel more like an adult, Abby said "*Yes definitely, because you have to help them with everything they need*." But some of the same girls who reported feeling like adults when looking after younger siblings were also quite quick to claim they were also 'children at heart' as if this was an identification with which they felt more comfortable. Thus, Carmen who looks after her younger brother and "*has to be like an adult for a week*" while her parents are away, stresses that she likes to play, as if this makes her (really or also) a child.

One boy, James (Group 1), had the following to say in response to the above conversation about looking after younger siblings:

James: No, I drop down to their levels, so that they actually think that I like what they're doing and then they just go along with whatever I say. (Group 1)

The above interaction stood out to me, as in all the other focus group discussions, none of the boys had any input in terms of feeling more like an adult or a child when looking after younger siblings, however in focus group 1 James explained that when he is with younger children he gets down to their level. It could be argued that James uses this method as a tactic to get the young people to listen to him, however, it could also be that he doesn't feel a huge sense of responsibility like the girls do when looking after younger siblings, as he presents himself as a more child-like when he is in the presence of a younger child. This could be a clear sign that girls mature quicker than boys and transition into adulthood quicker, as the girls commitment to looking after their younger siblings and expressing to me during the focus group discussion that they feel more adult-like when looking after their younger siblings is an indication that girls seem to meet adulthood or

become more adult-like while baby-sitting or looking after younger children or siblings. This really stood out in focus group 1 as none of the other boys in any of the other focus group discussions felt the need to put in any input on this topic, only the girls in all 3 focus group discussions spoke about feeling more mature when looking after young children.

Interestingly, many of the girls in the study, whether they looked after younger siblings or not, spoke with much affection about 'still' enjoying watching Barbie movies whether with younger siblings or even contemporaries as if this represents a strongly cherished moment in their lives:

Ella: I think I'm still like a child at heart because I still watch like Barbie movies and like animated movies (Group 2)

Most of the students agree and say: "Same"

Tracey: I love it when I see my cousin because she is like this little 3-year-old girl and I watch Barbie movies with her and stuff. (Group 2)

Rebecca: Um ok so I kind of agree with Georgie, except I don't watch Barbie my little cousin, I actually watch it with my friends… (Group 2)

As is clearly illustrated in the contributions above, some of the girls who assumed what they conceived as adult responsibilities by caring for younger siblings, still enjoyed participating in what they viewed, in contrast, as child–like forms of entertainment, such as watching Barbie animated movies with their younger siblings or with their 'friends' (presumably girls of their age). Post-structuralist feminist writers, such as Davies (2003) and MacNaughton (2000) argue that gender identifications are not singular and fixed, but multiple and fluid, and this is exemplified by the young women in my study and how they position themselves in relation to younger siblings both as carers (who look after them) as well as friends (who may share similar interests in forms of play and entertainment). In spite of common constructions of girls maturing more quickly than boys, as reinforced and reflected in presumptions about older girls making ideal care providers for

younger siblings, the girls in my study who were expected to assume such responsibilities also seemed to be questioning stereotypes of them as mature as opposed to playful as evidenced in the pleasure they derived from watching Barbie movies.

4.2.2 Question: What does it mean to be an adult?

When I posed this question in the focus group discussions, the most common response was one which linked adulthood with 'responsibilities'**,** and for eight of my participants, although I have only used three examples below, as we see in the following examples, below, this often carried negative connotations:

4.2.2.1 The perceived costs of adulthood

James: Taking responsibility for your actions. Because before you are 18 you aren't really responsible for your actions, you can just come back by saying I'm just a kid and I don't know what's going on but once you turn 18 all of that is your responsibility, no matter what you are responsible for it. So, if you were younger like 16 and you do something you won't get into trouble because ja you're just a kid, but as soon as you are over 18 you can still go to Juvi, so you become more responsible for your actions. So, it's just becoming more responsible for your actions. (Group 1)

Abby: I also think that when you go over 18, like everything you do becomes a little bit more serious. So, like everything will have a bigger knock on effect. Like now if I fail a test or something then it's like ok chilled it's just a test, but like if you're an adult and you fail something like you do in your job or work then you could be fired for that. So, everything becomes more enhanced and its more serious, so you actually have to be more focused and more responsible. Because now we get to do things and it's just like oh sorry (sarcastic voice). (Group 1)

James: But it's the same when I am in the car with my mom, there will be a certain amount of space between cars when we drive and then I think we can turn like there is enough time like I would be able to make that turn, but then I come back and realise like, no wait it's my mom, me, my brother and my sister and my brothers friends, so my mom is responsible for them so she can't take that

risk because it can end badly so you become more responsible and you think of the risk. So, I would of just gone, so as I kid I would have just gone but as I get older I realise no wait you can't actually go because there might be consequences. (Group 1)

The above focus group contributions illustrate the expectations and responsibilities which these and other participants in my study associated with becoming adults, constructing responsibilities which they imputed to adults in relation to the absence of these which, for them, characterized childhood. This is clearly articulated in James' account of his mothers' driving and the precautions he assumes she takes when he and other children in the family are present. Abby, one of the girls, acknowledged that being a child is different to an adult because becoming an adult entails assuming higher levels of responsibility with serious consequences which may ensue if these are not consistently undertaken. Furthermore, she explains that you don't get many opportunities to fail, whereas as a child you have the opportunity to fail and learn from your mistakes to a greater extent. However, it was clear that the boys in group 1 specifically felt a greater sense of the perceived costs incurred on becoming 'adults'. Both boys and girls agreed that being an adult involved accruing more responsibilities but the girls, like Abby, spoke more about standard 'grown up' things such as getting a job or being fired, whereas the boys, like James, spoke about being physically responsible, being physically responsible for one's safety, not only for themselves but for those around them as well. Perhaps the tendency for girls to be less concerned than boys about accruing responsibilities for others (which they associated with adulthood) reflects the fact that many of them, as argued in the previous section on the Gendering of Growing up, already carry responsibilities for looking after younger siblings.

4.2.2.2 Idealisations of adulthood and critiques of the teenager category

But while both boys and girls expressed concerns about 'growing up', relating to their perceptions of the costs of adulthood, some of my participants also idealised adulthood, as we see in the

following responses to my question about whether they liked or disliked the idea of becoming adults.

Abby: I feel like everyone is like I can't wait to be old and stuff and I can't wait to be an adult, like when we are young I used to say that, but I don't know I think this is going to sound really crazy but I've always thought and I've been thinking recently that I should have just skipped the teenage part because I can't wait to be like very independent, I don't know why but all I want to do… (Group 1)

Penny: The teenage part is weird (Group 1)

Abby: Ja, like know like being an adult is hard but I feel like it's such an awkward stage because as teenagers we don't have many things we can do by ourselves. We need lifts, we need money from our parents. So, like as soon as I get a job and I get a car and my driver's license I'm just going to be gone, you know what I mean? (Group 1)

James: It's like when you want to go to your mate's house or you whatever and you ask your parents and they say no because they have plans for the day. But at least when we turn 18 we have the freedom to say I can drive, I have my driver's license and I can go do what I want and I am independent so I can go do these things. (Group 1)

Clive: More as an adult. I feel like we have, well at least I have, moved on from being a child, and I would much rather be able to move overseas and start a life. And definitely, I want to get out of school and start working and really start my life, and I don't think you can do that as a child. More as an adult I would say. (Group 3)

In response to the question I put to my participants about whether they liked or disliked the idea of becoming adults, Abby and Penny introduced another category, namely the 'teenager' with which they seemed to reluctantly identify. This was also introduced by other participants in my study and seemed to carry quite negative connotations for them as pointing to and accentuating their lack of freedom in relation to their parents and indeed their dependency on their parents to

provide the necessary means for them to enjoy basic freedoms such as lifts and money. In the extracts above the participants reflect critically on the category 'teenager' as a kind of barrier to the freedoms and independence which they associate with becoming adults. In this way, their idealisations of adulthood and longings to achieve this state is very much tied up with their disaffection with being teenagers. Being a teenager was presented in the extracts above as a political category in the sense that it was always defined in subordination to adults, and more specifically parents on whom they were dependent for lifts and money etc Abby and Penny characterized this teenage phase as 'weird' in which they were dependent on their parents for so many things like getting lifts, whilst craving for independence. In further discussions I had with my participants about being teenagers and what this meant, they spoke critically about constantly asking permission to live their lives.

The introduction of the category 'teenager' by my participants pointed to the limitations of my initial research questions, and in particular the question I posed to my participants about whether they saw themselves as children or adults or both. While they provided thoughtful responses which often seemed to oscillate between the two, the category 'teenager' which was introduced by the students themselves seemed to provide a common, even if uncomfortable, source of identification for many of my participants. Teenager is a category that some of my participants used in a way which captured the conflicts they experienced and which they articulated above.

For having a 'messy room' and 'closing the door' Mary is rebuked by her father as a 'teenager' as if this is a highly pejorative term, as used in this context, with connotations of insubordination.

Mary: I feel like we don't do full on fights like shout at each other and stuff because I'm also really stubborn and stuff, so my mom and I usually argue about me doing stuff that she wants me to do, like my room is always messy and she always just gets annoyed at me for like having a messy room and then I always have like some comment back, so I tell her its fine like its my room and she doesn't live it so she doesn't have to get involved so then I close my door and my dad gets mad at me for closing the door and he says "Ah you're a teenager" (In an angry voice) (Group 2)

Jade: What do you think he means when he says you're a 'teenager'? (Group 2)

Mary: I don't know, it's just an excuse and something parents always say. I normally just remove myself, so I will write a note and put it on the fridge saying that I've gone to my neighbour Tess or gone for a run and then I feel better and come home, then we are all just calm and we forgive and forget . (Group 2)

4.2.3 Question: What does it mean to be a child?

4.2.3.1 The idealisation of childhood

When I posed the questions "What do you guys think it means to be a child? Or what makes a child a child?", ten of my participants from the focus group discussions presented childhood in very idealized and nostalgic ways, as if this was a period in their lives they regretted passing:

James: you don't have a care in the world. (Group 1)

Charlotte: I also feel that as a child you are quite selfish, it sounds very harsh but you think that the world revolves around you, like you scrape your knee and you wait for everyone to come rushing to you but like it's not… (Group 1)

Jade: Ok cool. So, what makes a child a child? (Group 2)

Mary: Having fun! (Group 2)

John: Having fun without thinking about consequences. (Group 2)

Mary: You are on your own mission. (Group 2)

Everyone is collectively agreeing (Group 2)

Emma: Not really having any cares and just always having someone to do everything for you. (Group 2)

Mary: Not having to pay for your own plane tickets (Group 2)

Samantha: And sleeping on your parents in restaurants (Group 2)

John: and they carry you home and to your bed! (Group 2)

Mike: Falls asleep in the restaurant and wakes up in bed! (lots of laughter) (Group 2)

Much like the idealization of adulthood, many children (ten students in my study) idealized childhood as it was seen as a much simpler time in their lives. Being a child was seen as a hedonistic time, having fun and enjoying one's life with little concern for others expect oneself.

4.2.3.2 High expectations placed on girls to be more mature

Influenced by young person-centred and school-based research conducted by Frosh et al (2002) in the UK which has found that many boys revel in being immature and girls complain about this, I asked my participants whether girls or boys reach adulthood more quickly or whether gender does not impact on this. Simply asking this question evoked a strong emotional response mainly from the girls asserting that a feature of boys in the school was their supposed immaturity, with girls, in contrast, having to deal with problems this provoked for them. Some of the girls complained, for example, about boys playing tag at break in the playground or quad and presented this as immature. The girls were critical, too, of the double-standard in the school in which boys were allowed to run around teachers and girls because it was assumed they were naturally childish whereas girls were assumed to be too mature and responsible to engage in such behaviour:

James: Me and my mates play tag at break. (Group 1)

Jade: That's awesome! Where do you guys play? (Group 1)

Abby: In the quad… around everyone. (Group 1)

James: Ja the teachers get very annoyed with us because we are trying to get away from someone and the teachers are in the way and we are like running around them and like touching and squeezing around them and its very annoying… (Group 1)

Kelly: That's what I mean like if girls, went running around school like that, people would be like what are they doing? But for guys it's just like oh that's funny… (Group 1)

Abby: So, if you think about it like that then girls are definitely more mature. (Group 1)

Penny: Also, I do feel that girls are a little bit more responsible, we kind of think things through, maybe because we overthink it. (Group 1)

In Mayeza's (2017) study of sport and play in a primary school near Durban, it seemed that playing in the playground, and notably soccer, was constructed as a boys' activity and, indeed, a medium through which boys constructed themselves as boys. While Charlotte, in my study, speaks about soccer at break as 'a chance for teenage boys to display childishness', she also seems to envy the boys' opportunities to play soccer while they [girls] sit which she describes as 'very boring'. Indeed, she seems to yearn for her primary school past in which games like soccer were more gender-inclusive and she had opportunities of playing this:

Charlotte: Teenage boys get the chance to display like childishness more, because like now the girls don't go and play soccer on the field, like you know because it's just not seen as… But like sometimes I want to because soccer is so fun during break and things. Like in prep school all of the girls and boys used to but then like in high school girls don't and I don't know why. (Group 1)

Jade: What do the girls do?

James: They sit. (Group 1)

Charlotte: We sit, its actually very boring. (Group 1)

In a later conversation I had with Charlotte, she explained to me that girls are expected to behave 'more maturely' [than boys] and not run around with the boys at school break times. She pointed out that girls would be looked at strangely by their female peers and by teachers if they were seen running around with the boys at break playing soccer. She suggested the boys would also find it strange if she decided to join in and play soccer with them at break for fun, precisely because "the girls usually present themselves as 'mature' and not interested in running around at break". She also pointed out that these playground gender dynamics were a feature of high school and not primary school, and that this reflected increasing pressures on girls to behave more maturely, such as "sitting calmly at break and chatting amongst their peers."

What is particularly significant in Charlotte's perceptive account of gender play at school break-time is how gendered constructions of maturity are, and how these are invoked and operate in ways that create and police gendered polarities and constrict what girls and boys can do in relation to sport (for an excellent account of how this happens in a township primary school near Durban, see Mayeza's ethnographic study on the gendering of play).

One of the girls, Samantha, who contributed to the discussion about how school break-time provided opportunities for boys to engage in 'stupid things' which they 'think are funny' pointed out that Trudge (the school's self- styled 'rite of passage') impacted much more on the boys than the girls who participated in this precisely because it encouraged participants to assume responsibilities which, in contrast to the girls, they were not used to taking.

Samantha: You should see what our boys do in break like some of the stupid or the things that they think are funny. Ok so compared to Trudge I think the boys matured far more; we were always mature but the boys from Grade 9 to know have definitely matured hugely. (Group 3)

Other girls, such as Rachel, agreed that girls were expected to help their moms while their brothers 'just ran around'.

Rachel: A lot of the time the girls are expected to grow up as well, like I will be expected to help my mom like cook or plan like holidays or whatever, but my brother can just run around and do whatever. (Group 3)

According to the 3 focus group discussions, it was clear that high expectations were placed on girls to be more mature. Girls were seen as more responsible and mature and to some extent they felt more pressure to act mature. In society, girls are often assumed to be more mature and 'calm', whereas boys or men are allowed to run free and act as they please because 'boys will be boys'.

In the book *Young Masculinities* (Frosh et al, 2002) girls are critiqued for being too mature and lacking fun by 11-14 year boys. During the *Young Masculinities* study, it was found that many boys celebrated being immature, constructing girls, in opposition, as 'mature' and 'boring'. A sign of popularity for boys was through acting immature, having fun and 'having a laugh'. During the interviews many of the boys likened being funny and humorous as an exclusively male characteristic as girls were not seen as robust enough to engage in such humour (Frosh et al, 2002: 104). The boys even shared that they found themselves monitoring what they said around girls and did not feel free in their speech around them (Frosh et al, 2002: 104). Girls seemed more serious and did better academically as well as being more committed to their school work, thus the boys viewed them as not being as much fun as boys. Many boys said that girls were more popular with the teachers and parents alike because of their maturity and commitment to school work (Frosh et al, 2002: 104). Frosh et al (2002) emphasizes that girls are viewed as more mature by the boys themselves as well as teachers and parents.

4.2.4 Questions relating to: 'Growing Up' and how this impacts on my participants' relations with adult care givers

Children do not grow up in social vacuums but in particular cultural contexts which produce certain kinds of power dynamics between children and adult care givers. I was interested in exploring how 'growing up' impacted on my participants' relations with adult care- givers at home and at school**.**

4.2.4.1 *Relations with teachers as care givers*

In Part 1 of this chapter I reported on key themes which arose in the TimeLine exercise in which my participants associated Grade 10 their current year with increasing academic pressures and a commitment to an academic work ethic. This not only seemed to take the fun out of work but also made relations with teachers, cold and instrumental, as articulated in the following student descriptions of teachers and teaching. What was particularly striking in these accounts of their relations with teachers was the absence of any reference to 'care'.

Indeed in critiquing teachers for not caring, some students spoke with much affection about one Teacher Z who was seen as bucking the trend and an exemplar of what they wanted all teachers to be like:

Ella: That's the thing about Teacher Z like he's so understanding and tries to comfort the students on a different level compared to so many other teachers and Teacher Z's really like… Teacher Z just sees another side of the students… and I've moved around A LOT so I know when a teacher is like you know good, like I can see and I know Teacher Z is a different type of teacher and I can definitely say that there are not many teachers who are so open and understanding and who make you comfortable! (Group 2)

Mary: Like before we even started Teacher Z did like a few activities with our class to see like how we are and like who we are as people not just… you know it's a good thing like he understands. (Group 2)

Jade! Oh wow really? What kind of stuff did you do?

Samantha: He made us do some weird things (Group 2)

Emma: Like he gave us a piece of paper and said make something with it, he didn't tell us what to do he just said make something, if you have to use paper, scissors, colour, whatever. So we all made stuff, I made an origami thing or whatever and stuff. (Group 2)

Samantha: He really gets involved with us and he doesn't just stand there telling us what to do and when to do it and when to have it done by, he actually gets involved with us… its really nice. (Group 2)

Jade: Are there not many teachers like that?

A resounding "no" from the Participants

The students praised Teacher Z for his empathy, openness, understanding, eccentricity and student-centred approach, with each one following the other in a kind of collective eulogy about Teacher Z. Clearly he was a very popular teacher and a kind of icon for these students, representing an alternative vision to more formalized teacher-centred pedagogies.

In opposition to the kinds of teacher centred pedagogies and relationships which were seen to characterize the final school years Mary idealized junior school as a space where teachers provided care and engaged socially with young people:.

Mary: In the Junior school the teachers are always there and they are like there for you, but then when you get to high school you don't really grow that kind of relationship with your teacher where you can just go and like talk to them, it's more of just a purely professional relationship, like if I teach then you listen (Said with a touch of anger) and you do what I say (Said with a touch of anger) and not really like most of teachers I wouldn't just go up to them and have a conversation with them and tell them what's going on in my life because you kind of feel like they don't really

care… Like their job is to sit down and teach you, not to hear about what going on and what your problems are.

The sudden emphasis in Grade 10 on preparing for examinations in instrumental ways seemed to undermine the school's commitment, as articulated in its webpage and promoted in staff meetings, to student centred pedagogies. While the school might justify a more teacher- centred pedagogic approach to meet the high expectations at the school with regard to its national examination successes, this was critiqued by many students.

Interestingly, Mary, presented the turn to didactic forms of teaching and instrumentalist relationships, in the final exam oriented years, as being motivated by an assumption that the students are 'more adult than they are', as if more student centred forms of teaching are aimed primarily at young people which they (Grade 10 students at the school) claim to be.

Mary: Ja I think they see you as more 'adult' then you are, that you should just be able to get on with it, when actually like there's a lot of things that a lot of people are dealing with and they don't know what to do about it but they can't talk to anyone, you just feel like the teachers don't really care. (Group 2)

4.2.4.2 *Relations with parents and guardians as care givers*

I asked my participants whether and if so, how their relationship with their mum or dad or other care giver changed as they had got older.

One young man, Mason, spoke about how he constructed his father as 'amazing' though his mother is conspicuous by her absence in his recollection. Cleary he was identifying with his father as a role model. Growing older has clearly transformed his relationship with his father in that it is no longer based on forms of idealization. Though his mum still features as a kind of referee mediating between the two men:

Mason: Ya, with my dad, when I was small I thought my dad knew everything, he was amazing and knew how to do everything super well. So I'd listen to whatever he said, and that's how you'd do it. But now I just argue with my dad. Not like angry arguments, but if we're talking about an issue that we see on TV or something, I often have a different opinion to him, and now we argue about it and see each other's opinions and stuff, and it's a conflict of opinions and stuff. But when I was younger if he said, "Oh, that's how that is," I would have been like, "Oh, okay." (Group 1)

Mason: But the problem is sometimes we both feel so strongly about it that my mom is like, "Guys, it's just on TV." (Group 1)

A common theme which emerges from the responses to the question I posed about the impact of growing up on their relationship with adult care givers at home concerns how to negotiate power relations in institutions in which guardians and parents may still wield considerable power. This generated some frustration about being so dependent upon them, as articulated in the following contribution from Penny which stresses how dependent she is on her parents for lifts and how they undermine her desire to pursue an active social life.

Penny: I know this sounds terrible, but when my parents had me they knew that I also have a life, and I'm entitled to be able to do hockey, which I love or matric dance meetings and stuff, so I am busy, but when my mom says, "I'm too tired to drive you there, " or "I'm too tired to do this," or "why do you need to do that?" and then they say, "Oh, we're so happy you do this, and that you're involved and stuff." I can agree with what Tristan is saying, it's very unfair for them to go, "No, I'm too tired to do this," or "I don't want to do that," or "why do you need to do that, that's unnecessary" or all of this stuff. So they want you to do certain things but then they tell you, "No, I'm not going to drive you there," or "No, I don't feel like doing that" or "No, this is unnecessary," and stuff like that. So I see what others are saying, it's sort of, not their job, but, they signed up to it. And if they didn't want us to do it then tell us that from the start. So it's like, okay, well now I can't get anywhere because you won't drive me. (Group 1)

The issue of depending on adult caregivers for getting lifts was seen as highly restrictive by Abby who re-enacts, in a gently mocking way the conversations she has with her 'caregiver drivers" pleading for lifts.

Abby: Yes, my drivers. That's what I say to my parents all the time. As soon as I have a drivers and a job, you will never see me again. But the other day, my dad was in the car, and he was complaining, he was like, "You're so demanding, whenever you want something, you want it now, and you can't just..." because I always ask my dad if we can go for a drive and shame, if he doesn't want to I'm like, "Dad please can we just go anyway, I don't see you the whole week" and I didn't say this in a mean way, but I'm like, "you don't really do anything else with me or for me, you don't really do anything else, driving's our thing." So when he's tired I'm like, "please can we just go?" And he's like, "you're so demanding, when you want something, you want it now." And I'm like, "Dad, fine, I'm just going to get my drivers and I'll be gone." (Group 1)

Abby was critical of how hierarchical relations between adult care givers and children could be set in 'set in stone', as if children who were growing up were not changing but constantly infantilized:.

Abby: I think everyone's relationships changes, not necessarily in a bad way. Everyone's changes as you get older because your opinions on everything changes and so does theirs. Just because they're adults doesn't mean that everything they think is set in stone. So they also can change, so I think that regardless of whether it's in a good or bad way, everyone's relationships changes. And probably if it's not changing, it's probably not actually a good thing because you need to be, not growing from each other, but do you know what I mean? Learning new things. (Group 1)

Interestingly, Abby claims "she does not see her 'parents' as 'parents" in the sense of having connotations of superiority over her and her opinions:

Abby: Me and my parents are more like, not in a disrespectful way, but I don't really even see them as parents, they're just the people I live with, do you know what I mean? Not in a bad way, but in their opinion, obviously they're going to be like, "No, you can't do that." And I'm going to be like, "Okay, fine." But in terms of opinion and stuff, mine is just as valid as theirs, so I'm never going to be too afraid to tell them something or... Some things I'm very open, some things I'm just like, "I don't need to tell you that." But most things, they know how I feel all the time about something. Ill express myself. (Group 1)

Some students such as Kelly spoke very positively about being treated like an adult, as she grew older, and the encouragement she received from her parents as she got older to be independent

Kelly: I think also your parents start to treat you differently when you're older, they're treating you like adults now and let you do things on your own, and even tell you to do things on your own and sort things out yourself. So your relationship does change. So you're just older and you treat each other differently now. (Group 1)

Carmen, too, was positive about having "proper conversations," as she grew older, with her adult care givers at home. But she also refers to how differently her brother views his relationship with his parents and whether to open up to them, and this seems to reflect the tendency of their parents to treat her more like an adult than her brother:

Carmen: You can have proper conversations with them. And also, my relationship changed a lot. My brother, he's in that way where he doesn't know if he wants to be close or not close with my parents, and with me I just opened up. I didn't close myself off. I just kept on telling my parents stuff, and I tell them everything. Whereas with my brother he's really closed off and he's more to himself. He doesn't share his opinion and stuff like that. So I think with him it's kind of different, but with me, I wanted that relationship to grow. And it's also, my parents see me as more as an adult and stuff like that, so to some people it may seem like I'm being rude to my parents and I'm disrespecting them, but it's just our banter, the way that we joke and stuff like that. (Group 1)

One of my participants, James, was highly critical of his father, in particular, for not offering any care or affection towards him and his brother or engaging in forms of play or fun with them. This was an insight which he obtained as a result of growing up: and interpreting and putting together events of the past in which his father had shouted at them, prevented them from playing, was lazy and self centred:

James: I started getting scared of my dad because he had an office upstairs in our old house, and then we could never play in the backyard because we'd make too much noise, his office was right there. He'd climb out the window and start shouting at us because there was this little balcony and he'd climb out and start shouting at me because I'm making too much noise. But then I can't play so then I go inside and he shouts at me for inside. He became a hypocrite to me, because he says I can't do something, but then when I don't do that, no, I can't do that either. So I go outside and play, no you can't play I'm busy, go inside, why you inside all the time? And then he always used to say, "don't play on the phone in front of the TV," but as soon as my parents got smartphones they've always been on their phones in front of the TV, the whole time, and as soon I pick up my phone they shout at me because no you can't do that. I've also seen that my parents have become a lot more lazy, the way I see it they've become a lot more lazy towards doing things. My dad will play a game of chess with my brother, but it's literally just him sitting down and my brother getting everything ready. But if we want to go and do something, if I want to do something with my parents, no, they can't. I always wanted to go to the gym with my dad because he used to go to gym and I wanted to go gym with him. And he says, "No, I'm too tired to go to the gym" but it's like 5:30 in the afternoon and he's been doing nothing all day. So I just see my parents as a lot more lazy than what I used to see them, and they've just become such big hypocrites. (Group 1)

Chapter 5: Conclusion

5.1 My interest in exploring growing up from the perspectives of female and male school learners

My interest in exploring 'growing up' from the perspectives of female and male school learners is informed by the 'New' Sociology of Childhood (James & Prout, 1997) which critiques commonly held assumptions that children are 'adults in the making' and not worthy of study in their own right (Pattman, 2015). Such assumptions which have 'traditionally dominated childhood and youth research' are 'adult-centric' in the sense that they take adulthood as an implicit unarticulated norm. From such a perspective 'growing up' is understood as something which happens to children and young people on the way to becoming fully-fledged 'grown-ups'.

I take issue with the idea that adulthood represents the endpoint of 'growing up' and provides a vantage point from which to view and guide children about how to 'grow up' and achieve adulthood. Rather the key questions which inform my research trouble the very categories of childhood and adulthood and focus on how these are constructed and negotiated by 'learners' (as school students are called in South Africa) in their late teens attending a private high school in the Western Cape. Rather than taking childhood and adulthood as biological categories fixed by chronological age, I pose questions about what for my participants signifies childhood and adulthood. What associations do they make with these, and how they identify in relation to versions

of childhood and adulthood at school and home? Do they see themselves, as high school students, as transitioning between the two, and if so why? To what extent is this influenced by contemporary concerns, anxieties and pleasures they derive from their status as high school students and the kinds of social and academic expectations they may experience?

Rather than assuming that childhood and adulthood are unitary and homogenous categories, I posed questions about how gendered and how classed 'growing up' is, in and out of school.

5.2 Developing learner –centered research methods

In order to explore processes of negotiating childhood and adulthood with my participants, I engaged in focus group discussions with them. In particular I wanted to focus on how they positioned themselves in relation to adult carers at school and home and how certain kinds of institutional practices might reinforce or unsettle boundaries between adults and children organised around understandings of authority and care.

The focus group discussions were precipitated by a Timeline exercise in which I asked my participants to reflect on the last few years in their lives and identify memorable moments in these. I asked them to compare each other's Timelines in their group. Such an exercise provided rich insights regarding their understandings and experiences of 'growing up' and what they associated with this and liked or disliked about this. It also provided much fun and opportunities for supporting and validating each other's concerns and interests with regard to themes such as growing engagements or disengagements with sport, boyfriend/girlfriend relationships, increasing academic pleasures and travelling abroad. Significantly, these were linked by my participants with narratives of 'growing up' in ways which engendered feelings of excitement but also sadness, as if associating 'growing up' positively with opportunities opening up for them, and negatively with increased responsibilities and anxieties.

During this exercise and throughout my research I placed the young people as the experts on my topics, putting the onus on them to set the agenda throughout the focus group discussions.

5.3 Addressing my research questions

The Timeline exercise prepared the foundation for further focus group discussions in which I posed questions about how they categorized themselves and the extent to which they felt they slotted into 'age-related categories' such as children or adults. Significantly the category 'teenager' was introduced by some of my participants as one with which seemed to capture the power dynamic which characterized relations with adults and notably with parents. This was connected with idealisations of adulthood, as a kind of post- teenager state which they associated with fantasies of 'independence'. But 'growing up', as high school learners, was also associated with the sudden incursion of academic pressures to succeed. Ironically this seemed to generate, for many of my participants, fond memories about older times when they felt much less pressured, and accompanying narratives which idealised childhood as a time and space in which caring responsibilities for them were undertaken by adults.

'Growing up' had its costs, not least the perceived loss of forms of care and support provided by teachers at school and parents and guardians at home. The students I spoke to expressed major concerns about the introduction in their year, (Grade 10) of teaching pedagogies, which did not inspire creative thinking and were motivated by instrumentalist considerations to promote academic success in the national examinations. The students with whom I spoke did not enjoy these courses and derived little academic stimulation from their attempts to engage with their teachers. 'Growing up' opened up new opportunities for students to travel abroad and socialise and party, but their movements depended upon getting lifts from care givers and these often led to moments of contestation about the power dynamics characterising various social groups.

How gendered and how classed is 'growing up' for my participants in and out of school? This was a key research question of mine, and my findings suggest that 'growing up' was highly gendered and classed. Several girls spoke about the 'responsibilities' they acquired in providing care and support for younger siblings, as if, as some mentioned, it was assumed they were fulfilling motherly roles. Interestingly, these girls also spoke about caring for their younger siblings not just as a responsibility but also as a fun experience (when, for example, they were babysitting and

enjoying playing with Barbie dolls) making it clear that they were children 'at heart' even when taking on adult responsibilities. Significantly, it was only girls and not boys who mentioned undertaking such responsibilities.

I reflected briefly on my own experiences of accruing caring responsibilities as a young girl, in my case as a daughter providing care and support for my mother as a single parent, thus inverting common understandings of adult-child relations.

When I enquired in the focus group discussions if girls or boys grow up more quickly, the question generated much laughter from the girls, as if I had touched a familiar point of contention. A key concern they raised related to the numerous ways in which the boys dominated the playground during break times and ran around sometimes disrupting girls who sat with each other. I also noticed how boys took up so much space and made it difficult for others to walk about for fear of getting in the way of their games. I noticed, too, in observations of classes which I attended, that boys took much longer to settle down than girls at the beginning of lessons, and how this seemed to be taken by teachers as reflecting boys' 'immaturity'.

But some of the same girls, who criticized the boys for being disruptive and immature in the playground at break times, also seemed to envy them the freedom they had to play soccer and run around. Further, these girls spoke with fond memories of playing soccer in primary school and sadness that this was no longer available for girls. One of the effects of being constructed as more mature than boys seemed to be to constrain and limit girls' movements including their participation in games, and notably soccer, during break-times.

No girls beyond Grade 7 in their Timelines mentioned sport or sporting achievements, as if sport was no longer significant as a source of interest and pleasure for girls to pursue. In stark contrast, it was common for boys to refer to their sporting achievements up to and including Grade 10 (their current Grade) in the Timeline exercise. While playing soccer informally in the playground, disrupting spaces for walking and making a lot of noise, all seemed to be cast in ways which signified boys' presumed immaturity, the boys took much pride in presenting their formal sporting achievements and referred to these in ways which seemed draw on popular signifiers which link

sporting achievements with 'maturity'. Many of the boys referred, for example, to the institutions they represented (such as the school or district and national teams), the hard work they put into obtaining their sporting awards, and their ability to compete in the same teams as boys older than them.

How social class (in conjunction with gender) may impact on accounts and experiences of 'growing up' was demonstrated in the Timeline exercise in which the learners in my study participated. One of the themes emerged from this exercise where the learners were asked to record memorable moments over the previous few years was 'Travelling Abroad'. Many of my participants introduced and reflected upon this in the more recent years on school and family organised trips they made abroad and how this had impacted on them. In particular, they referred to the logistical, social and organisational skills they had acquired through their experiences of going abroad and how these had contributed to them 'growing up'. These particular examples of 'growing up' which my participants provided, demonstrates just how classed their understandings and experiences of 'growing up' are. For such opportunities of going abroad whether on school trips or family holidays are made available to learners from relatively privileged backgrounds and whose families can afford to pay. As mentioned in Chapter 2, the school in which I conducted my research was what Kenway and Lazarus (2017) characterize as 'elite' in being able to provide resources by charging high fees.

5.4 How my research participants experienced participating in research about themselves and 'growing up'

I understood and treated the focus group discussions and the Timeline exercises not as instruments for extracting information from the young people in my study, but as social encounters through which I established relationships with the young people, which in turn empowered them to speak and think critically about themselves. As mentioned before, this was initially a challenge when I began conducting my research at the school, due to the fact that the young people originally saw me as a relatively inaccessible figure of authority. I tried to break down these walls during the focus group discussions that I conducted. This was particularly problematic given my commitment, to research with children, to engage with them as experts and figures of authority

about their lives and identifications, interests and anxieties relating to growing up. Being seen as a grown-up with all the connotations this held of being an expert and figure of authority undermined my very commitment to learner-centred research, and as I mentioned in Chapter 3, one of my initial challenges as a researcher, was to undo the way my participants constructed me.

To this end, I stressed that I would like them call me by my first name, Jade. I also explained to them that they were going to be the experts in my research and that I would like them to bring up topics that were relevant to them and what they would like to discuss regarding 'growing up'. I mentioned too that I was a past learner, hoping that this would encourage mutual identifications. Though, as discussed in Chapter 3, presenting myself as an 'insider' in this way also carried certain drawbacks, with some of my participants failing to elaborate on their experiences of schooling because they assumed I was, as an ex-learner myself already familiar with this.

In conceptualizing the focus group discussions and Timeline exercises, I facilitated social encounters rather than instruments for eliciting information from students, the usual boundaries between teachers and learners became blurred. As a researcher, I subverted such boundaries by making it very clear I wanted to learn from them, the 'learners', about 'growing up' as if they were the experts. I aimed to promote and facilitate social encounters with my participants in which they and I learnt from each other about interests, understandings and experiences of growing up and the pleasures and concerns these evoked. The effect of this was to blur the usual boundaries drawn in academia between research and teaching, and to convert the research sessions I had with my learners into participatory pedagogic exercises.

In presenting my research in this way, I wanted to engage with findings from my research, focusing on not just what my participants had to say in response to my research questions, but also how they experienced participating in my research. To this end I want to draw on the feedback they provided at the end of my fieldwork.

When I asked students how they found being interviewed, many expressed surprise, imagining that there would be little room in an interview to have 'an open discussion' 'without boundaries' and about relevant topics like 'being a parent one day' which they 'don't normally just talk about.'

They also liked the way they 'could talk about anything and it would lead onto something else.' Also mentioned was how 'safe they found the space to be to share their opinions in the conversational dialogues.

Below I quote from my learner participant's responses when asked how they found being interviewed and their experiences of having me as a facilitator.

From Focus Group 1

Penny: I also didn't really feel like it was an interview, I just felt like we were having a discussion.

Carmen: Ja me too.

Abby: It was cool.

Jade: Ok cool, what did you like or dislike about it?

Kelly: I liked how we could be very open and honest.

Abby: Ja and there weren't like boundaries, like we could talk about anything and it would lead onto something else. So, it was just like an open discussion.

Jade: That's awesome! Did you guys feel like you could almost lead the conversation?

Penny: Ja definitely!

From Focus Group 2

Jade: How did you guys find being interviewed?

Greg: It's nice because I share my own opinion in like a safe space.

Jade: What did you guys like or dislike about being interviewed?

Tracey: Its nice that's it's a big group because then you don't feel like added pressure and stuff.

Emma: It's nice to have people listen to what you have to say and to take your opinion as important (smiling)

Jade: Yes your opinion is very important!

Mary: But I think it's so nice because these aren't topics that we would normally just talk about, like you're not going to go up to someone and be like, hey what do you think life will be like as a parent one day? The topics that you gave us we won't normally talk about amongst ourselves. It's just nice to be able to say what I think.

From Focus Group 3

In Focus Group 3, the participants also pointed out that they felt very safe to share their thoughts and opinions with me as they felt that I treated them as adults and validated what they had to say about their lives and 'growing up'. Two participants in this group raised the question of my gender and the impact that had on them and how they presented themselves. One of these, a young woman, imputed feelings of care to me by virtue of my gender, and interestingly this was picked up by a young man in the group who implied that I had appropriate kinds of social and conversational skills which he associated with femininity.

Jade:. What did you guys like or dislike about being interviewed?

Kira: I really loved that our opinions really mattered and like played a role in something.

Jade: Oh yes, this whole thing is about you guys so thank you so much for being so open with me.

Kira: Ja I thought that was pretty cool.

Rachel: I loved that we found out new things about each other.

Kira: You [Jade] just have this vibe of very like nurturing and caring so it's like when you talk back to us and have a conversation with us it does seem like you genuinely care…. Whereas, I mean I'm also being sexist now, but if we were with a man I would still feel comfortable but it would feel more about the research maybe, whereas I just feel like you care.

Jade: Yes, I really do care, thank you!

Clive: Ja I just feel like if you were a man it would have been like more formal and more held back. I feel like it would have been more forced conversation.

Many of the young people who participated in my research further explained that they appreciated how open and honest they could be without feeling judged by me, because I was invested in what they had to say about life and 'growing up'. The young people felt validated in terms of being heard by myself, a young adult, as they had not had many experiences where adults put them in a position of authority.

5.5 The under-representation of race in this school and the impact of this on my research

Race was conspicuous by its absence in this school, reflecting, presumably the still very close relationship between race and social class in the post-apartheid era. Unfortunately this absence was reflected in my research, but rather than ignoring this I want to highlight this fact. Whereas the Timeline exercises and focus group discussions about 'growing up' produced very rich data on the gendering and classing of 'growing up' and power dynamics which informed these, nothing was spoken about the racialization of 'growing up.'

The 3 focus groups I conducted with learners at this school comprised about 10 students per group, with one person of colour in each group, and not surprisingly the topic of race in relation to growing up was not raised by anyone. While I was eager to bring up and discuss race and people's (Black and White) students particular experiences of growing up and attending the school they do, I was careful not to single anyone out (Black or White students) or make them feel uncomfortable (unless they raised this themselves) .

I could have raised this myself, and perhaps, in hindsight, I could have changed the research dynamic by including individual interviews with students. Such contexts might have facilitated possibilities for raising issues about race and 'growing up'. But I was concerned about not reproducing discourses which take for granted whiteness as the norm and construct Black people as the racialized Other.

The dearth of ethnographic and interview research in South Africa in predominantly white private schools is highly problematic not least because it reinforces the invisibility of *white privilege* in these schools. Significantly, in the Timeline exercise, in my research, many of my participants illustrated, without necessarily articulating this, let alone connected this with *white* privilege.

5.6 The Missed: The importance and missed opportunity in LO in the school

During the focus group discussions, the young people in my study indicated that there were certain teachers they could open up to and talk about sexuality, however they did not feel as though Life Orientation was a platform that they could share their opinions relating to sexuality openly. This seemed like a missed opportunity in terms of discussing sexuality with the young people, but instead the young people were painted as asexual beings who do not or should not partake in sexual activities, due to the lack of conversations that the young people were having in regards to sexuality in their everyday lives. However, the students shared that sexuality was not a topic that was ever discussed during Life Orientation classes.

It emerged that when it came to topics, such as sexuality, children felt unheard. This is problematic for many reasons, but specifically because we imagine that schools are places that are supposed to

encourage critical thinking but, for the most part, they don't. This is due to that fact that it is commonplace for teachers to present themselves as authority figures and that is how the classroom environments are organised, however, in my research I am following a tradition of writers and researchers influenced by the 'New' Sociology of Education which puts children in the forefront of their studies as the experts. What I did in my research was to try and think seriously about the relationships that I was establishing with these young people in a school setting, and even a school setting which I described as relatively humanistic. I observed that the teachers had control in the sense that they set the agenda during classroom times. However, I didn't want to be viewed as a figure of authority and therefore the young people were more partial to opening up to me precisely because I did not present myself as a figure of authority.

Therefore, in part, I have come to view my research as a pedagogic practice in which all my participants, as well as myself, partook. The Timeline exercise in conjunction with the focus group discussions created an opportunity for young people to engage with and learn from one another. My research suggests that the student-centred questioning approach I used during my own research could potentially offer an illustration of good pedagogic practice which could be applied in life orientation/sex education programs in schools and tertiary institutions in South Africa

The dynamic of the focus group discussion was a fascinating one as I tried to create an environment that was friendly and open, however I still had to keep the focus group discussion going by being the facilitator. The line between facilitator and friend could become blurred at times, as I made a clear that the participants should view me more as a peer than a figure of authority. This was problematic at times as the young people in my focus group discussion would occasionally become side-tracked in their own private discussions due to all the participants being acquainted with one another.

Yet, being a familiar face proved to be an advantage as well, as I invited the participants to serve as a catalyst, putting the onus on them to lead the discussion and this, in turn, produced boundless discussions during the focus group discussions. This allowed participants to reply to issues that had been raised by specific participants during the focus group discussion, and this might not have occurred if I had done individual interviews instead of a focus group discussion.

5.7 Implications of my research for contributing to the development of Life Orientation teaching plans on 'Growing Up'

Life Orientation, as defined in the official Life Orientation curriculum in South Africa is the 'study of self in relation to others and to society' and was introduced into the school curriculum in the late 1990s in the context of the HIV/AIDS pandemic and in response to the perceived failure of didactic approaches in sexuality education to stem the tide of HIV/AIDS.

It draws instead on pedagogic concerns to engage with the agency of young people as self-reflexive, social and sexual beings (Pattman & Bhana, 2017). But recent studies such as Shefer et al (2015) and Francis (2017) have found that topics in Life Orientation relating to sexuality and 'growing up' are often taught in quite judgmental and moralistic ways.

In my study 'boyfriends and girlfriends' emerged as an important theme in the Timeline exercise, yet when we discussed this topic and when I asked if this was a topic that teachers addressed in Life Orientation, it seemed that this was rarely addressed and when it was, often elicited embarrassment and giggling especially among the boys, as if contributing, in turn, to the presumption that boys were too immature to talk about sex and sexuality in the classroom

Life Orientation in this school tended to not to engage with young people, and sexualities nor provide opportunities for students to pose questions and seek support from Life Orientation teachers in school. Indeed, the general consensus in the focus group discussions was that Life Orientation was not as useful a subject as it could be, with some students, comparing, favourably, the guidance they received compiling their CVs in Life Orientation with the lack of guidance which was offered in Life Orientation lessons when the theme was sex and sexuality.

I want to argue that my research may carry important implications for developing Life Orientation initiatives in this and other schools which focus on the topic of young people and 'growing up' and promote 'the study of self in relation to others and to society' as Life Orientation is framed in South Africa, as well as engaging with the young people's agency as sexual beings.

As my student participants clarified in their feedback, my research was not as they imagined it to be, with me asking questions and them providing answers, but, to their surprise, opened up conversations in which they engaged on topics about which they said they rarely spoke, such as childhood and adulthood and how they positioned themselves as 'girls' and 'boys' in relation to these.

Such discussions were often highly gendered with girls and boys learning from each other about, for example, their caring responsibilities of younger children at home, or their participation and positioning in the school playground in break times or their sporting interests or lack of these, or experiences of boyfriends and girlfriends. Such conversations seemed to open up opportunities for girls and boys to learn from each other about gendered forms of 'growing up' and the costs and pleasures they associated with these. These kinds of conversations were made possible by the dynamics of the research encounter which contributed to the students feeling 'safe', a point which was raised a number of times in the student feedback.

This was greatly facilitated by developing critical exercises such as the Timeline exercise which encouraged biographical reflection and created a safe and stimulating environment in which participants could discuss issues relating to 'growing up' including gender and sexuality. I want to argue for the contribution such methodologies might make in encouraging a stimulating and supportive culture conducive to critical self-reflection and dialogue.

As I argued, and as supported by the learners' feedback about my research project with them, my research could also be understood as a particular, learner-centred pedagogic practice which promoted safe, open and non- judgmental spaces for learners to engage with concerns, anxieties and pleasures relating to 'growing up'.

Indeed, as mentioned, the English teachers at the school recognized the 'pedagogic value' of my proposed research which was why they were so encouraging and helpful, offering spaces for me to conduct my research from their own teaching programmes.

In Chapter 1, I explained that my motivation for conducting research in this school was linked to an explicit commitment, by the school, to student-centred pedagogic activities and practices aimed at encouraging students to reflect critically upon themselves as young women and men.

This was most clearly illustrated in the 'Trudge' initiative and the school's rationale for developing this as a rite of passage aimed at promoting certain values relating to empathy, care and responsibility. Going on Trudge, the previous year, was the most often repeated memorable moment in the Timeline exercise, I conducted with my participants. And it was clear in the conversations I had with my research participants about this that they valued this very highly and especially for opening up opportunities for making new friends through engaging with them in this physically and emotionally demanding activity.

While opening up opportunities for different students to engage with other students as part of a student-centred pedagogic commitment which addresses students as social and sociable beings, student 'diversity' is restricted by virtue of the school's status as an 'elite school' (Kenway and Lazarus, 2017) which charges high fees.

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Appendix A

UNIVERSITEIT•STELLENBOSCH•UNIVERSITY
jou kennisvennoot • your knowledge partner

STELLENBOSCH UNIVERSITY
PARENT/LEGAL GUARDIAN CONSENT FOR CHILD TO PARTICIPATE IN RESEARCH

I would like to invite your child to partake in a study conducted by me, Jade lee Dare, from the Sociology department at Stellenbosch University.

1. **PURPOSE OF THE STUDY**

My study aims to explore how students aged 16-17 years old relate to, engage with, construct and understand adult caregivers such as parents, guardians and teachers. The focus of my research is about transitioning into adulthood and the way in which young people aged 16- 17 years old experience adult carers both at home and in school. I am particularly interested about the extent to which they experience support from and the influence of their adult carers.

2. **WHAT WILL BE ASKED OF MY CHILD?**

If you consent to your child partaking in this study, your child is required to complete an assent of participation form, to join a focus group discussion. The focus group discussion will involve about 8- 10 students and we will have a conversation about their transition into adulthood and what roles

their care givers both at home (parents and guardians) and at school (teachers) play in this. With a few guided questions, most of the discussions will arise from topics that your child and the other participants bring up during the focus group discussion.

3. POSSIBLE RISKS AND DISCOMFORTS

Your child will not be forced to partake in the discussion. If they feel uncomfortable discussing a certain topic, they may withdraw from the conversation. If they choose to leave the focus group discussion, it will NOT be held against them. Your child will remain completely anonymous so no-one will know what they said.

Mrs Daniella Randall from the Senior School Student Development Unit, will be my liaison throughout the study. Should you have any queries, please contact me directly or Mrs Daniella Randall at d.randall@somcol.co.za. You are also welcome to contact my supervisor, Prof. Rob Pattman on 021 858 2940, or if you wish to speak to a third party about the focus group discussions, please contact Malene' Fouche' at mfouche@sun.ac.za.

My research proposal has gone through thorough ethical clearance.

4. POSSIBLE BENEFITS TO THE CHILD OR TO THE SOCIETY

I believe your child can benefit from my research, as it provides an opportunity to voice their understanding and views of growing up, without prejudice and will contribute to new research findings. There is very little research done on this area, despite the proliferation of research in developmental psychology that focuses on children as adults-in-the-making, rather than as active agents in their own right. Furthermore, in sociology there is a whole history of work on socialisation from a parental point of view and how to raise children, as if children are simply composed of developmental stages. However, the aforesaid construction of children is being criticized by contemporary sociologists, who want to develop a sociology of childhood, which places children as active agents and see the world from their point of view.

5. PAYMENT FOR PARTICIPATION

No payment will be given for participating in this study.

6. PROTECTION OF YOUR AND YOUR CHILD'S INFORMATION, CONFIDENTIALITY AND IDENTITY

Any information you or your child share with me (the researcher) during this study and that could possibly identify you or your child, will be protected. This will be achieved by asking that the participants do not mention any names and by keeping conversations focused on the example and not on who the person is.

Pseudonyms will be used to maintain anonymity. All students, parents, guardians and teachers, as well as the school will remain completely anonymous. The focus group discussions will be voice recorded, transcribed and kept on a file on my computer. The file will be stored in such a manner that it will not be identifiable, as there will be no identifiable information on the files. Furthermore, my computer, as well as the files, will be protected by a password at all times. If at any point the participants want something they said erased, they are more than welcome to come to me and I will oblige. Furthermore, I will request that students in the individual interviews and the focus group keep what was said in these discussions as confidential by requesting not to discuss with others what has been discussed in individual interviews or focus group discussions

The minors' identities will be protected unless required by law, e.ge. in cases of suspected child abuse, as stipulated in regulations for research with monirs.

7. PARTICIPATION AND WITHDRAWAL

You and your child can choose whether to be part of this study or not. If you consent to your child taking part in the study, please note that your child may choose to withdraw or decline participation at any time without any consequence. Your child may also refuse to answer any questions that they do not want to answer and still remain in the study.

8. RESEARCHERS' CONTACT INFORMATION

If you have any questions or concerns about this study, please feel free to contact Jade Dare at 18347541@sun.ac.za and/or the supervisor Prof. Rob Pattman at rpattman@sun.ac.za

9. RIGHTS OF RESEARCH PARTICIPANTS

Your child may withdraw their consent at any time and discontinue participation without penalty. Neither you nor your child are waiving any legal claims, rights or remedies because of your participation in this research study. If you have questions regarding your or your child's rights as a research participant, contact Ms Maléne Fouché [mfouche@sun.ac.za; 021 808 4622] at the Division for Research Development. Again, Mrs Daniella Randall from the Senior School Student Development Unit, will be my liaison throughout the study. Should you have any queries, please contact me directly or Mrs Daniella Randall at d.randall@somcol.co.za. You are also welcome to contact my supervisor, Prof. Rob Pattman on 021 858 2940.

DECLARATION OF CONSENT BY THE PARENT/ LEGAL GUARDIAN OF THE CHILD- PARTICIPANT

As the parent/legal guardian of the child I confirm that:

- I have read the above information and it is written in a language that I am comfortable with.
- I have had a chance to ask questions and all my questions have been answered.
- All issues related to privacy, and the confidentiality and use of the information have been explained.

By signing below, I _____ *(name of parent)* agree that the researcher may approach my child to take part in this research study, as conducted by Jade Lee Dare

_____ _____

Signature of Parent/Legal Guardian **Date**

DECLARATION BY THE PRINCIPAL INVESTIGATOR

As the **principal investigator,** I hereby declare that the information contained in this document has been thoroughly explained to the parent/legal guardian. I also declare that the parent/legal guardian was encouraged and given ample time to ask any questions.

_____ _____

Signature of Principal Investigator **Date**

Appendix B

	*STELLENBOSCH UNIVERSITY*

ASSENT FORM FOR ADOLOSCENTS

TITLE OF THE RESEARCH PROJECT: *Young Men and Women's Constructions of Adult Caregivers*

RESEARCHERS' NAME: Jade Lee dare

RESEARCHER'S CONTACT NUMBER: 0718700227

What is RESEARCH?

Research is something we do find **NEW KNOWLEDGE** about the way things (and people) work. We use research projects or studies to help us find out more about children and teenagers and the things that affect their lives, their schools, their families and their health. We do this to try and make the world a better place!

What is this research project all about?

My study aims to explore how students aged 16-17 years old relate to adult caregivers such as parents, guardians and teachers. The focus of my research is growing up and how young people aged 16 to 17 years old experience adult carers both at home and in school and the extent to which

they experience the adult carers as providing them with support in regard to growing up. Partly that is about looking at the relationships young people establish with carers both at home and at school. I am interested in finding out whether people's relations with parents and teachers is influenced by whether they are male or female or what kind of background they come from I am trying to understand the transition from childhood to adulthood from the point of view of kids, like yourselves, and the extent to which you experience support and help from adult carers , I am also interested in how you identify yourself whether as a child or an adult or somewhere in between and what this means. Thus, I will look at this phase of growing up and how adult carers feature in growing up. I want to find out whether young people get advice from both adult carers at home and in the school about preparing them for the future and what this means .

Why have I been invited to take part in this research project?

You have been invited to partake in this research as you are a student between the ages of 16-17 years old at the school I am conducting research at and I felt your opinion could be useful for to my study.

Who is doing the research?

As I mentioned earlier, my name is Jade lee Dare and I am doing my Master's degree in Sociology at Stellenbosch University. I am doing this research as part of my Master's degree.

What will happen to me in this study?

If you are willing to partake in my study I will ask that you join a focus group discussion. The focus group discussion will involve about 8- 10 students and we will have a conversation about growing up and what roles your care givers both at home (parents and guardians) and at school (teachers) play in this. I will ask you some questions, but most of the discussions will arise from topics you and your friends bring up during the focus group discussion.

Can anything bad happen to me?

Nothing scary or bad can happen to you during the focus group discussion, you do not have to talk about anything you do not want to. If you feel uncomfortable discussing a certain topic you do not have to partake. If you choose to leave the focus group discussion, it will NOT be held against you. If you participate in a group discussion with 5 or 6 other young people, you'll get an opportunity to hear from each other about people's views and relations with adult carers. There will also be an opportunity after the focus group discussion to reflect upon this discussion and to talk about issues which you may not have been able to raise in the group discussion. Everything you say in the individual interviews will remain completely confidential and will not be discussed with others outside the focus group discussion or individual interviews. Anonymity will also be adhered to by not using your real in any data or reporting of findings, but by using pseudonyms instead.

Can anything good happen to me?

This focus group discussion is an opportunity to you to express how you feel about growing up, as well as you being able to express how you understand and view the adult caregivers in your life. Everything you say will remain completely confidential so this is the time for you to have a voice, and I cannot wait to hear what you have to say.

Will anyone know I am in the study?

No one will know it is you partaking in the study. Your name will not be used and the study will be kept confidential. The only person who will see what is said during the focus group discussions is my supervisor, Professor Pattman, but I will not tell him your name or who said what.

Who can I talk to about the study?

If you have any questions or problems related to my study or if you want to talk to anyone about this study you can contact me (Jade) on 0718700227. You can also contact my supervisor Professor Rob Pattman on 021 858 2940.

You are also welcome to contact Mrs Daniella Randall d.randall@somcol.co.za from the School Development Unit if you feel you need to speak to someone at any time. Mrs Randall, the school psychologist made it very clear that she is available to assist those learners who participate in the study, should you require her support.

Please note that if you feel that you need to talk to an outsider about anything, you can contact child-line on 080 00 55 555.

What if I do not want to do this?

You do not have to partake in this study if you do not want to, it is completely up to you. Even if your parents have agreed to let you participate you can still decide to not do it if you do not want to. Furthermore, you can stop being a part of this study at any time and you will not get into trouble at all. You have the right to withdraw or no longer participate in the study at any time during the research process. I will ask you if I could use the data obtained, or else delete your data if you request this from me.

Do you understand this research study?

YES	NO

Are you willing to take part in this study?

YES	NO

Has the researcher answered all your questions?

YES	NO

Do you understand that you can STOP being in the study at any time?

YES	NO

_____ _____

Signature of Child Date

Appendix C

Focus group guide

The following are the kinds of questions that participants will be asked during the focus group discussions. Most of the questions are going to be ones that are in response to issues raised by the participants themselves. Part of the process of doing these focus group discussions is to engage with the people I am interviewing as the experts and authorities. I want to hear how they experience adult carers both at home and in school and the extent to which they experience the adult carers as providing them with support in regard to growing up, by positioning them as the experts. Therefore, I pose questions which ask them about their understandings understanding, experiences and constructions of adult carers both at home and in school.

Welcoming

1. Thank the participant for agreeing to participate within the study.
2. Ensure that the participant has read, understood and signed the consent form. Thus, ensure that they are reminded that all information will be kept confidential, and should they want anonymity, they will have pseudonyms, also should they want to terminate their consent to participate in the study at any time, they are allowed to do so.

3. Ensure that the participant is reminded that the interview and/or focus groups will be recorded to generate an accurate depiction of their experiences.
4. Remind participants that there is no set right or wrong answer, and that the desired outcome is to hear about their experiences and anecdotes.

Introduction

I want to chat with you about what it's like growing up as females and males in your mid to late teens. But before we start chatting I'd like you to draw a Timeline over the last 5 years of your lives from 11/12 to your current age. In this time line I want you to highlight for each year important moments in your lives such as changes (in where you live, in relationships and friendship, achievements).

Once you have drawn this Timeline I would like you to read it out loud to the group, and we shall compare peoples' Timelines . And we'll discuss whether, and if so how, you have changed over the last 5 years. We'll also discuss whether you think the changes that have happened over your Timeline are ones for the better or not.

Self- Identifications

How would you define yourself …as a child or an adult or somewhere in between? Please elaborate and give examples.

Does your answer to this depend on the context you're in? (For example when you're with your peers or with your parents or grandparents)

What does it mean, do you think, to become an adult?

What makes an adult an adult, and what makes a child, a child?

Would you say you are becoming adults? If so how and do you like or dislike this? If not when do you imagine becoming like adults?

Do girls or boys reach adulthood more quickly or does gender not make a difference in this?

Impressions of adult caregivers in School

- Does schooling prepare young people for adulthood?
- Following on from the question above, do teachers prepare you for this transition? If so how?
- Is this different for boys and girls?
- Do you provide care for younger children (at school or home)?
- How do you learn from adult carers at school about growing up through your everyday experiences with teachers?
- Do subjects like LO or other subjects address aspects about growing up? If so, how, and how useful do you think this is?
- Are you able to talk about sexuality with other learners and with teachers? If so do you talk about sexuality in similar or different ways with your teachers and with peers?
- Are there prefects at your school? If so, do they behave more like adults or children, and how do you relate to them and them to you?

Impressions of adult caregivers in the home

- Who do you live with?
- Who are your adult carers at home?
- Do you talk about similar or different things with your mom and your dad (or male or female guardians? If so, what?

- Do you turn to your mum or dad (or male and female guardians) if you have problems. If so what kinds of problems?
- Do you feel comfortable talking to your parents/guardians about boyfriend/girlfriend relationships? Do you feel more comfortable chatting to your mum or dad about this?
- Do you get into arguments with your mum or dad or guardians? If so about what sorts of issues
- Do you view adult carers at home and school as sources of support, help and guidance, and/or as role models

- Are these gendered or not?

- What support and what information, if any, do you get both at home and at school in relation to growing up and how useful do they find this?

Diversity in families

- What difference, if any, do you think it makes growing up in family with parents and guardians of the same or opposite sex or in single parent and multi parent families?

- Do you talk about sexuality and boyfriend and girlfriend relations with male and female adult caregivers in home and at school?

Growing up and the relationships we form with adult caregivers

- Has your relationship with your mom and/or dad changed as you have gotten older? If so, how?

Becoming adult caregivers in the future

- Do you imagine being parents in the future? Do you imagine being fathers and mothers?
- If so why/why not, and what do you think you will be like?

Participants' reflections on being interviewed

How did you find being interviewed? What did you like or dislike about it? How did you find being interviewed by me? Do you think it would have made a difference to what you said if I had been younger or older, or if I'd been a man?

Appendix D

Participant Observation Guide

In addition to conducting focus group discussions, I will be using participant observation as another method of data collection.

I will employ participant observation at least in the school on how particular children engage with and relate to different teachers. Whilst I cannot observe my participants in their homes with their parents, I can observe the interactions between teachers and students. I will sit at the back of the classroom, so that I can get an idea of young people's constructions of caregivers in school just from the interactions between the teacher and pupils (young people). I will look at how they address their teacher and how the teacher addresses them? I will look at the extent to which the lesson is student centred. And how pedagogy is establishes both between the young people and the teacher. By hanging about with the young people in class I will also look at to what extent are views and relationships that the young people establish with adult carers, are these gendered? And does that come across in class at all, do boys and girls have different relationships with the

teachers and with women teachers and men teachers, and, if so, how are they different? I will keep a field journal with me to keep track of what I observe, such as what is mentioned above. I would hope to spend a few lessons with the students observing and getting to know the individual students. Again looking at how this is mediated by resources in this private relatively affluent school, specifically with the low learner –teacher ratio.

I hope to observe the pupils from August 2018 until the sufficient amount of data has been collected.